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# The Kickapoo Valley



## THE KICKAPOO By WM. HAUGHTON.

When heaven's creative hand was laid  
Upon these gorgeous hills  
In emerald sheen and gold arrayed,  
And cleft by flashing rills,  
I traced in beauty mead and dale  
With charms forever new,  
But left its blessings on that vale  
Where flows the Kickapoo.

O favored land! — No foot has trod  
Through fairer paths than thine  
Where hills uplift their heads to God,  
And speak His power divine,  
Where valleys breathe of peace and rest,  
Fresh as the morning dew,  
And Vernon on her own warm breast  
Impearls the Kickapoo.

Above me bend the clustering boughs;  
The cliffs around me stand  
And heavenward rear their giant brows  
In beauty calm and grand,—  
I linger lovingly and long  
Beside these waters blue  
And yearn to give thy name to song  
O peaceful Kickapoo!

But men will come in after days  
Thy wondrous charms to see,  
And many an abler pen will praise  
Thy matchless scenery—  
God shield thee by His mighty arm  
And every wrong subdue;  
God keep thy dwellings safe from harm  
O tranquil Kickapoo!

Retreat, Wis.



# The Gem of Wisconsin









Bird's Eye View of Viola, looking from Mt. Nebo.

(From a Photograph by E. O. Slodkin.)



# THE KICKAPOO VALLEY

—THE—

## Gem of Wisconsin.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KICKAPOO VALLEY, ITS  
EARLY SETTLEMENT, PROGRESS AND DEVELOP-  
MENT—ILLUSTRATED WITH HALF-TONE  
ENGRAVINGS OF BUILDINGS, SCENERY,  
REPRESENTATIVE MEN, ETC.

—BY—

GERTRUDE FRAZIER & ROSE B. POFF.

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1896.

*See also*

## Introductory.

In presenting this handsome little volume to the public, we are prompted to do so by hearing and reading many fictitious reports about the Kickapoo Valley and its inhabitants. Out of loyalty to the country, love for our homes and local institutions, our high esteem for the citizens of the Kickapoo Valley, and the great admiration we have for the beauties of Nature which we behold in any direction we may turn, we undertake this publication.

We shall endeavor to give a correct, but necessarily brief, description of the Kickapoo Valley, (not including the West branch of the river, nor any tributaries but just the main valley,) with an account of its products, industries and the people who settled and developed the valley; also the present state of progression, educational facilities, religious and civic societies, etc., etc.

The writers obtained the information presented in this book by visiting, personally, each and every place mentioned and interviewing the oldest inhabitants, the dates and statistics being the most reliable that could be procured.

The Kickapoo Valley and its inhabitants have an established unsavory reputation, extending throughout the state of Wisconsin and even beyond that it

is a territory some fifty miles long, wild and undeveloped, inhabited by illiterate people who are designated timber thieves, horse thieves and desperadoes. That such statements are wholly false, we will prove by the indisputable evidence herein. The engravings we present to the reader will give some idea of the development, enterprise, industry and progression of the inhabitants of this far famed and much abused Kickapoo region.

That this book shall be an instrument in removing the great ignorance and prejudice which prevails even among the people of our own state, and if it shall convey to our people and those of other states a true knowledge of this region, the end for which we have worked will have been accomplished.

In gathering the material for this edition we have been assisted by the citizens all along the valley in many ways and aside from this we have some contributions herein which are valuable acquisitions to this effort. Acknowledgment is hereby made for all these favors and our sincere wish is that this book may fulfil, at least in a measure, the expectations of our friends who have wished it success.

THE AUTHORS.



## The Kickapoo Valley.



This picturesque valley whose very name suggests the forest primeval through which the Red Man hunted the deer and the elk, and in the shadow of whose cliffs the tumultuous stream follows its devious course, circuitous many times but yet ever onward, is a fit theme for the poet and a region of delight to the artist with pencil or brush. The innumerable nooks, the imposing heights, the peaceful flocks and herds grazing on the hillsides or resting in the shade of some giant tree, and the vistas of river with overhanging boughs on either side—the sunlight and shadow dancing together on the water—all seem to have been created for the delectation of the camera fiend.

No matter in what direction one sets his face a new scene presents itself at each turn of the road and each seems more beautiful than the last. The bluffs

which bound the valley, whether clothed in the heavy, many-tinted foliage of the forest trees, or with the luxuriant growth of grass which gives the appearance of a great moss bank hundreds of feet high, or whether crowned with a frowning cliff, each in its own unique way is surpassingly beautiful. To me they are like people, some morose and gloomy, some sunshiny and bright. Some seem to be a veritable tower of strength, others seem to have nothing to recommend them but the fact that they fill a gap. The headlands in which these bluffs end jut toward every point of the compass and one's judgment on each like that on the political issues of the day, depends on one's point of view. A bluff which from a distance promises to be very imposing, on a near approach may become very commonplace.

Sometimes there is a succession of bluffs of almost uniform appearance and extending in same direction, but more often they zig-zag in all directions.

The forests which clothe the hills and valleys are hardwood trees of the oak, maple, hickory, and black walnut species; among the softwood trees linwood and elm are most abundant. Mingled with them all are birch, poplar, ironwood, butternut, boxelder and pine. The lower slopes of many hills produce a luxuriant growth of sumac and hazel. Scarcely less beautiful are those slopes whose timber growth has been cut away and are now covered with fields of waving grain.

Between almost any two of these bluffs flows a stream of the purest water whose source is a spring gushing from the hillside or bubbling up through a

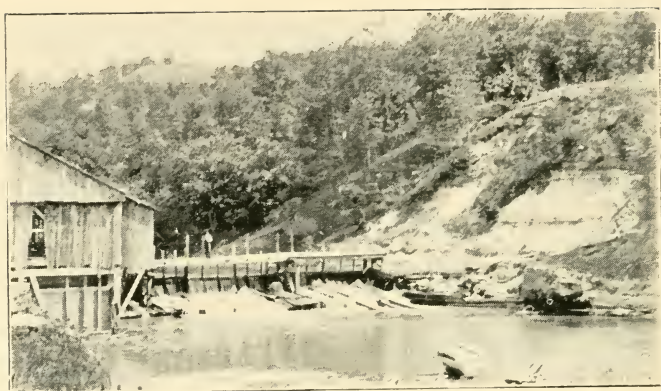
sandy bed from some reservoir deep in the earth. These brooks are the natural home of speckled trout.

This fairest and most gorgeous of Wisconsin gems of scenery lies in the western part of the state, north of the Wisconsin River into which the Kickapoo empties. Surrounded by tall waving grass and sheltered by a clump of trees, the Kickapoo River wells up to the surface a few miles to the northward of Wilton, in Monroe County. At first it is only a brook across which a child might jump, but it is soon augmented by many other brooks and becomes a river.

It waters a region about eighty miles in length but is itself much longer, for it is as its name in the Indian tongue indicates, a "crooked river." Its general course is to the southwest. On its way to the Wisconsin it crosses the counties of Vernon and Crawford and the northwest corner of Richland. In some places, especially near the mouth, the valley is narrow and the cliffs on either side stand like sentinels guarding some sacred treasure. At other points the valley suddenly widens out and smilingly invites the husbandman to garner in the riches so profusely spread out.

Not only in the valley is the scenery very beautiful, but a view from the top of one of the bluffs presents a new world. As far as the eye can reach is shown a succession of hilltops, each crowned with cultivated fields and substantial residences. The water supply for these hill farms is usually obtained from a well by means of a windmill.





The pioneer residents of the Kickapoo Valley must have looked upon the stream as a benefactor. These early settlers were lumbermen, and the river not only furnished the power for sawing the logs into lumber, but on its surface were floated to market the products of the mills along its banks. And although the stream has shrunk with the encroachments of man even as the Indian has been driven from his domain, it has lost none of its power as a force producing agency. It turns the wheels of many factories but might as easily be utilized for thousands beside.

The average width of the stream is about one hundred feet, the average depth three feet, while it probably has a fall of about two feet to the mile. As it originates and finds its never failing supply of water in living springs which abound from its source to its mouth and therefore do not freeze in winter, the power afforded is of great value.

The Kickapoo is spanned by many bridges, some

of wood but the majority of iron. The firm of Herman Timmerman, of Ontario, has built and has under construction a total of forty iron and steel bridges across the Kickapoo and its tributaries during the last four years. These bridges, if placed end to end, would reach a distance of three thousand feet. The weight of the iron and steel in them including sub-structures is five hundred and sixty thousand pounds. This metal if rolled in one bar one inch in diameter would be over forty miles long. A great many iron bridges have been built by other companies. Beside these highway bridges, the river is crossed by the C. & N. W. R. R. and the C. M. & St. P. R. R., once each, and by the Kickapoo Valley and Northern five times.

The numerous streams which empty into the Kickapoo, as well as the river itself, water many fine stock farms. As a dairy and stock region the Kickapoo Valley is unsurpassed. The creameries and cheese factories and herds of fine cattle and other blooded stock bear testimony to this. The grass which is native to this valley is here known as June grass, and is said by best authorities to be the famous Kentucky blue grass. This grass abounds wherever the underbrush has been cut out, and is as good pasturage for all kinds of stock as the state produces. Even the most steep hillsides are thus not waste land as they are covered with grass and have been found to be exceedingly healthful places for sheep.

The Kickapoo Valley would be a haven of rest to the farmer of the western prairies who is accustomed to see a fine promising crop destroyed in a night. The crops in this valley never fail. The pro-

ducts of the farms will be spoken of in another place. A sight long to be remembered is that which meets the eye of the traveller through the Kickapoo Valley in the harvest season. The broad acres of waving grain, the vast corn fields and the sweet smelling hay fields are so interspersed as to present a most pleasing picture.

The sportsman with gun or rod will find the Kickapoo Valley well stocked with game. The woods are full of squirrels and rabbits. The snipe shooting on lower course of river is unexcelled. Quail and grouse are plentiful. The books in the office of the fish commissioner at Madison show that five hundred fifty-six thousand brook trout and eighty-six thousand rainbow trout have, during last four years, been placed in streams entering the Kickapoo. About two thousand acres on the lower course of the river have



Mt. Nebo, the Patron Mountain of Viola.

lately been leased by a company who are stocking it with Chinese Pheasants, imported direct from Asia.

The woods invite not only the sportsman with his deadly gun; the botanist may fairly revel in the wealth spread out at his feet. Space forbids anything like an enumeration of the thousands of varieties of plants native to this valley. Almost every family is here represented. A visitor to the woods in spring time is sure to be rewarded with many kinds of ferns, delicate anemones, modest violets, nodding trilliums, buttercups, wild roses, lady slippers, columbine, honeysuckles, harebells, wood orchids, oxalis, fluer de lis, Dutchman's breeches and Jack-in-the-pulpit. Later in the season the roadsides are gorgeous with golden rod, asters and ox-eyed daisies. Aromatic mints grow profusely in many localities. Berry patches abound everywhere, and in their season vast quantities of red and black raspberries, blackberries, gooseberries and elderberries are picked. Wild strawberries, plums, black haws, chokecherries and black cherries delight the youngster, who, later in the season, gathers and hoards up for winter an abundant supply of hazel nuts, butternuts, walnuts and hickory nuts. From many of the trees hang festoons of hop vine and grape vine laden with fruit. Water cress grows in the spring brooks. A drive through the country in winter when the snow is deep may bring one upon a brook filled with this growth. The sight of that long, dark green, velvet ribbon lying in knots and loops upon the white field will not soon be forgotten. One thinks instantly of the soft cushions of thick moss lying beneath the

snow and already green waiting for the first hint of Spring.

Underneath all these multifarious forms of vegetable life lie vast beds of building stone of a fair quality. It is of limestone formation. Rocks from which lime is burnt are picked up from some of the ravines, where they have been washed by the rains.

Each season of the year seems to us who live here the most beautiful. Winter with its skating and sleigh-rides and nipping cold is a well beloved season. Springtime with its awakenings to life and activity, aside from its vernal beauty, is always a time of delight to an industrious people. The Summer with its promises of plenty is ever welcome. The Fall, when these pledges are fulfilled, woods and fields and gardens and orchards overflowing with fruitfulness, calls forth expressions of most sincere praise. When one attempts to describe the scenery in the Kickapoo Valley, words utterly fail to set forth the glory of the autumnal woods when the hillsides put on their Fall colors. The purple of the ash, the many tints of yellow and red affected by the maples, the dark richness of the oaks—all bathed in the violet haze of the Indian summer—such scenes must be viewed daily to be realized. Mingled with these are the reddish-brown bobs and red or yellow leaves of the sumac, the clusters of wild grapes, the magnificent coloring of the Virginia creeper and the wax-like berries of the honeysuckle.

"I know not how, in other lands,  
The changing seasons come and go;  
What splendors fall on Syrian sands,  
What purple lights on Alpine snow!  
Nor how the pomp of sunrise waits  
On Venice at her watery gates;  
A dream alone to me is Arno's vale,  
And the Alhambra's halls are but a traveller's tale.

"Yet, on life's current, he who drifts  
Is one with him who rows or sails;  
And he who wanders widest lifts  
No more of beauty's jealous veils  
Then he who from his doorway sees  
The miracle of flowers and trees,  
Feels the warm Orient in the noonday air,  
And from cloud minarets hears the sunset call to  
prayer!

"The eye may well be glad, that looks  
Where Pharpar's fountains rise and fall;  
But he who sees his native brooks  
Laugh in the sun, has seen them all.  
The marble palaces of Ind  
Rise round him in the snow and wind;  
From his lone sweetbrier Persian Hafiz smiles,  
And Rome's cathedral awe is in his woodland  
aisles."

(Whittier.)

## History of Kickapoo Valley.

There is abundant proof that the Kickapoo Valley was a thickly inhabited region hundreds of years before the Red Man descended upon it.

The valley of the Wisconsin River from the portage to the mouth of the stream is believed to have been the great central seat of population during the dominance of that mysterious race, THE MOUND BUILDERS, about whom so much is conjectured and so little known.

North of the Wisconsin River and between it and the Mississippi there were thousands of earthworks built by this race. But these mute monuments of an extinct people can tell us but little more than the fact that they existed. Even their name has perished from off the face of the earth.

They loved the Kickapoo Valley as an abiding place, for here they built some of their most remarkable works. They seem to have been alive to the advantages offered by the site of our fair village, for mounds showing some of the highest skill and ingenuity displayed by them are found in Mound Park



addition to Viola. The land on which this part of the village is built was formerly owned by Mr. H. L. Turner, and we quote from the *History of Vernon County* parts of an article written by him for that work:—

“There are thirty-two mounds on the place. Scattered around in groups of one or more on about 100 acres of land, of a dry, sandy soil, being above high water mark, the mounds are always on good dry land. They are of various forms and sizes. Some are round, some are long straight mounds of earth; some are in the form of animals, and some of birds; all are very distinct, and show clearly what they are. But they vary from the animals and birds of the present time.

“The first group consists of three mounds. Two of these are nearly in the form of deer lying down on their sides, facing each other, their heads about two rods apart. They are about six rods long in their bodies; their tails six or eight rods long. The knee joints of both forward and hind legs are bent back, and the tails are very long for deer. The other mound is in the form of a bear lying on his side, and is about five rods long.

“Group No. 3 consists of thirteen round mounds, in two rows; one of the rows is straight—the largest mounds are in the middle. The other row is in a curve, in which there are seven mounds.

“The largest mound on this farm is called the Eagle. His wings and tail are extended as though sailing in the air. From tip to tip of wings is about thirty rods.

"About thirty rods to the northwest of the Eagle is Hawk mound. It is about eight rods long and has extended wings and tail.

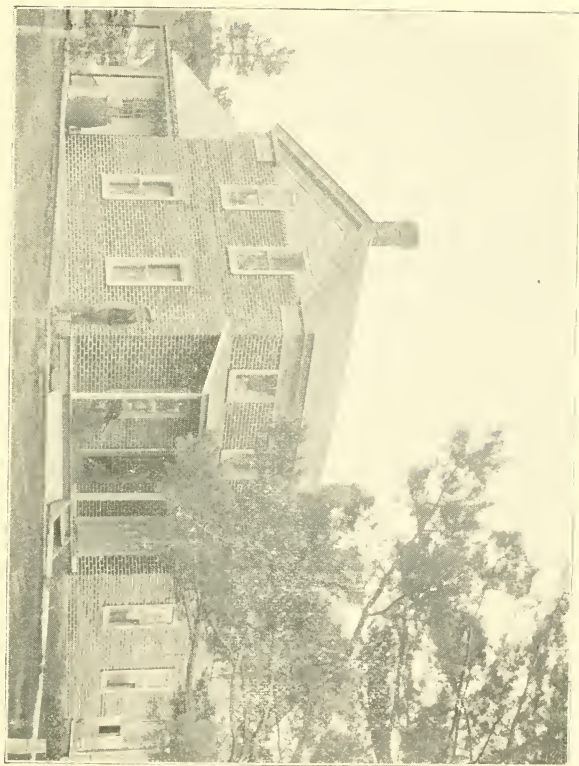
"Group No. 5 consists of two mounds, one in the form of a beaver crouched on the ground, his legs under him; the other mound is the same animal lying on his side and forward of the other. They are about six rods in length.

"Group No. 6 consists of two mounds in the form of birds. They are alike, both flying the same way. They are side by side, the tips of the wings just touching each other. They are flying south. These are called the Wild Geese."

For directions as to exact location and further description the reader is directed to the History of Vernon County.

There are other mounds on same place in the form of birds and beaver as well as of regular forms. The adjoining farm of Mr. David Sommars contains mounds of like character. Indeed, they abound all about here, and not only in the vicinity of Viola, but in all parts of the Kickapoo Valley. The average height of these works when the country was first settled was from two to three feet.

People have supposed from the name of the Kickapoo Valley that it was once inhabited by the Kickapoo Indians, but such has not been found to be true. At the time of the discovery and settlement of this region it was peopled with Winnebagoes. By the terms of a treaty with the U. S. government in 1837 this tribe agreed to remove to the west of the "Father of Waters" within eight months. It was



Farm House of J. B. Sommers, near Viola.  
(From a Photograph by E. O. Sloulin.)

a much longer time before they really made good their treaty, but they finally all disappeared from the Kickapoo Valley which has not since been the home of any Indian tribes. It is some times visited by small bands of Indians, but even this is getting to be rare.

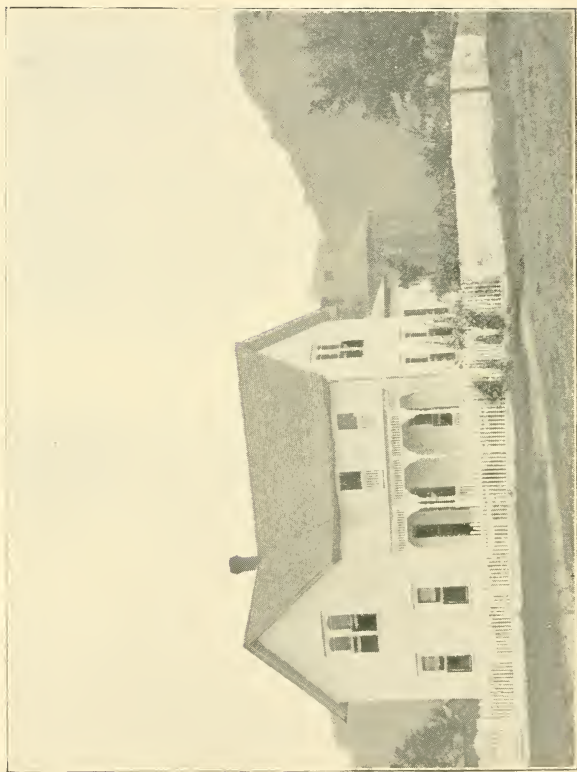
The Kickapoo River was explored by W. T. Sterling in 1832. Mr. Sterling was born at Lexington, Ky., in 1808. He came to Wisconsin in 1827. He passed through two Indian Wars in Wisconsin and shows a wound received at the Battle of Bad Axe. He was in the first Territorial Legislature which convened at Belmont, Wis., and of the second one at Burlington, Ia. He represented Crawford and Chippewa Counties in the first and third State Legislatures. He now makes his home with his son at Petersburg on the Kickapoo. Mr. Sterling is still a vigorous old man and remembers much of the pioneer days of Wisconsin in which he took a prominent and useful part. The writers had an interview with him and he very kindly furnished the following information:—

“In 1832 I started out to explore the country. My home was at Madison, Wis. I went to Prairie du Sac and there purchased a large canoe from an Indian. In this, accompanied by my wife and two children and two white men, I started down the Wisconsin. I passed down this river until I reached the mouth of the Kickapoo. I went up that stream, the party camping at the mouth of each tributary until I had explored it. The valley was a veritable wilderness, the timber being principally oak in lower

course and pine in the upper. The river at that time contained three times the volume of water that it now does. I found some difficulty in getting the canoe through the fallen timber in some places. There was an Indian village at Haney Valley and an extensive one at the forks of the Kickapoo. At the latter place they had about one hundred acres under cultivation. They raised pumpkins, potatoes, squashes, and a species of wild tobacco. They manufactured lead which was brought from Galena. The bullets used at the battle of Tippecanoe were manufactured at the forks of the Kickapoo. I could speak the Indian language fluently at that time and found the Indians very friendly. They belonged to the Winnebago tribe."

The earliest white inhabitants were trappers and hunters and the men who carried on lumbering. Mr. A. M. Rosencrans of Wauzeka, says that the first company of trappers was composed of twelve Germans who came from New York. They crossed the Wisconsin River at Wright's Ferry and went to Coon Prairie. Here the party broke up and went to different parts of the Kickapoo Valley. This party of men were a rough set and it is said they added the making of counterfeit money to their avocation of trapping. The company comprised "Dutch Charlie," McBee, McFee and Troutwine.

A little later another lawless company of men had their headquarters on what is now the Olson farm near Viola. A doctor by the name of Hill owned the place and kept a station for a band of horse thieves who were thought to operate in Illinois.



Residence of Frank Rogers, Viola.  
(From a Photograph by E. O. Stoulin.)

But the number of honest, law-abiding settlers increased very rapidly about this time. These people wished to make their homes here and did not propose that the thieves should go unpunished. The trappers emigrated to pastures new, and the citizens assisted the officers of the law to capture the horse thieves. In 1864 they were sentenced to three years in the penitentiary; but,

“Like the vase in which roses have once been distilled,”

Which though

“You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,

The scent of the roses will cling round it still,”

the names Kickapoo and Kickapoogian have for over thirty years been associated in the minds of some *narrow-minded* people with horse thieves. Rather should the inhabitants of this Valley have been honored for not harboring such persons among them.

From Mr. Sterling and other sources it was learned that Esau Johnson was the first white man to go up in the “pinery” to work. The “pinery” then extended as far south as Seeleyburg. Mr. Johnson carried on lumbering all along the Kickapoo but settled about two miles above Ontario. The dates given us by different people vary so much that it is impossible to say just which point was first settled, but it is certain that saw-mills were built at Wauzeka, Gays Mills, Readstown and Odin previous to 1850.

The earliest settlers we found now living on the Kickapoo were Mr. A. M. Rosencrans, of Wauzeka, who came to that place in 1846, and Mr. John Anderson, a Scotchman, who came to the Kickapoo Valley in 1849, and who now lives at Star.



A touching story of pioneer life was told by Mrs. Giles White, of Ontario. She came with her husband to the Kickapoo Valley in 1855. She did not see a white woman for eight months after landing here. The woman she then saw was Mrs. Ostrander of Odin, near Rockton. Months after this, Mrs. White was taken in a canoe to visit a white woman, Mrs. Myron Tuttle, who lived down the river a few miles. Mrs. Tuttle had heard of the intended visit and came down through the woods toward the river to meet them. Although strangers, the two women embraced and kissed each other and wept as if they had been sisters. There was no place for the formalities of fashionable life in such a wilderness. No matter how much Nature may smile, human companionship is the dearest thing to the human heart. All hail to the brave pioneer women who were deprived of it!

## Towns and Hamlets.

### Viola,

"Beautiful for situation," under the protecting shadow of Mount Nebo, lying on both sides of the county line, and the center of a rich farming district, is almost the geographical center of the Kickapoo Valley.

Among the many citizens of which Viola is justly proud, there are none more entitled to respect than are the pioneers of the village. Mr. Samuel Estes had a hunting shanty below the village at an early day, but the first man to settle with his family in the near vicinity of the village was Mr. Laal Clift, who was followed in a short time by Messrs. Salma Rogers, Hartwell Turner, Cyrus D. Turner, Wm. Turner, J. L. Jackson and John Fuller, with their respective families. These people became citizens of the Kickapoo Valley in 1854. Mr. Cyrus D. Turner assisted by his brother Hartwell, laid out the village of Viola in the summer of 1855. The name Viola is a tribute to a young lady who had been their teacher in New York. The first store was kept by

Cyrus Turner, and the first saw mill built by H. L. Turner. The following year, 1857, H. L. Turner erected the first grist mill. These early pioneers were intelligent people and within a few months had a school organized and taught by Miss Helen Jackson in a building that also did duty as a dwelling house and a store. A church was instituted among them at an early day. Rev. Jas. S. Lake acted as sponsor to the Viola M. E. Church in 1856. Indeed, the residents of Viola have always been fond of organizing themselves into bands for the purposes of systematic benevolence, good fellowship, and reform. At the present time the village supports many societies beside the churches, Sunday School, and other religious bodies. The oldest of these societies is the *I. O. O. F.*, which was organized July 23, 1870, with five charter members. At present the membership is forty-seven. Two hundred and twenty have passed the portals of this lodge since it was established. At this writing the N. G. is Mr. Salma Rogers, V. G. is Mr. John Schroeder. This lodge owns a building worth \$2,000, well furnished, neat and tasty.

*The Ancient Free and Accepted Masons* were organized here in Dec. 1892. Present membership sixteen, and officers, N. H. Burgor, Master; Jas. Treseder, Senior Warden, and A. J. McCarty, Junior Warden.

*Castle Rock Camp of Modern Woodmen No. 2720*, was organized Feb. 12, 1895, with ten members. This society represents about \$50,000 insurance. The membership is twenty-seven, and officers,

J. C. Hull, V. C.; N. H. Burgor, Clerk; Jas. Treseder, Banker.

*Jerry Turner Post No. 85 Grand Army of the Republic*, was organized May 24, 1885. Present officers, Commander, G. W. Wise; S. V. C., W. P. Clift; J. V. C., C. H. Downer. Its membership numbers 36.

*The Woman's Relief Corps* of Viola began its existence in May, 1894, and at present numbers nineteen members. The president is Mrs. Cena Clift, and secretary is Miss Bertha Loveless.

A secret society including women as well as men is known and hailed as *Mt. Nebo Lodge No. 29, Rebekah Degree*. This society was instituted Oct. 10, 1889. Membership thirty; officers, Mrs. Cena Clift, N. G.; Mrs. Amelia Clark, V. G.; Mrs. R. C. Poff, Sec.

The "White Ribbon Army" of women has been represented in Viola since Feb., 1887, when a *Woman's Christian Temperance Union* was organized by Miss Amy Kellogg. This society has served the people of Viola well in various ways, but in none better than in fostering a spirit of piety and devotion to the right among all who have been influenced by them. This band of loyal women is led by Mrs. Loveless as president and Mrs. Angie Cushman, secretary. The offices of president and secretary of Richland Co. W. C. T. U. are held by members of the Viola Union, Mrs. R. C. Poff, and Miss Kate West, respectively.

The various societies here enumerated show the citizens of Viola to be an enterprising people. If there



Store and Residence of Wm. J. Waggoner, Viola, Wis.

were any doubt on the subject, a glance at the different places of business and the men who preside over them, would dispel it, and a glance at the streets on almost any day would show that Viola commands the trade of a large section of country.

The mercantile business is done by Wm. J. Waggoner, C. F. Matthews, A. J. Anderson, and C. A. Henthorn carrying general stocks; N. H. Burgor and C. F. Matthews with lines of drugs; Jas. Treseder, hardware and undertaker's supplies; A. W. Guess & Son, clothiers; O. C. Barnes, furniture and undertaking; Thaddeus Kendall, groceries, and H. Calkins, jewelry.

Hull Bros. with a meat market help to feed the five hundred people who live in the village, while A. W. Guess of the Viola House and Geo. Gerlach of the Commercial House care for the traveling public. And if your horses, weary traveler, need to be shod, or your wagon or any farm machinery needs repairing, it can be done at any one of four blacksmith shops. While you are waiting you may have your choice of two tonsorial parlors, and should you chance to fall sick, either of two physicians, Dr. W. E. Belt or Dr. C. M. Poff, will restore you. When you are able to leave town, you may get a team and fine turnout of either of two livery firms, Barber & Layton, or Earl Truesdale.

Viola is proud of the work done by our photographer, Mr. E. O. Sloulin, proof of whose ability is shown by his contributions to this work. The various trades are well represented by efficient workmen. The millinery establishment of Mrs. C. F.

Matthews deserves special mention. A lumber yard is just being opened by Hull Bros. The milling industries and numerous factories will be spoken of in another place.

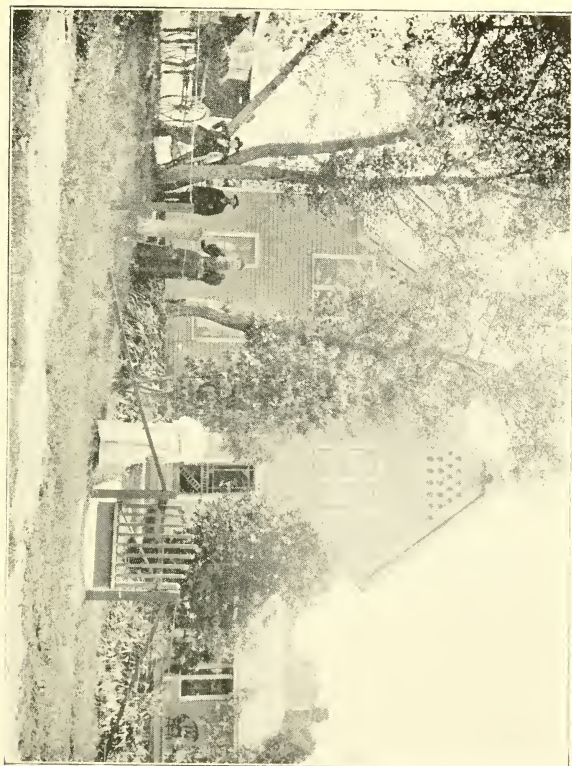
The best interests of the community are materially advanced by a live newspaper, *The Intelligencer*, an eight-page weekly edited by Frazier and Frazier. The enterprise was founded in 1890 by Cliff M. Wells. After his decease the work was ably carried forward by his wife who is now a partner in the firm. This office is favorably known over a large territory for the fine job work they send out.

The banking interests are in the hands of an able man. The Bank of Viola, owned and operated by N. H. Burgor, was established by him in 1891. In 1894, Mr. Burgor erected a first class brick building into which the banking business was moved. The Bank Report for 1896 shows the Bank of Viola to have a capital and surplus of \$10,000, and the total resources to be \$24,000. In addition to his banking, mercantile and agricultural interests, Mr. Burgor deals in real estate and writes insurance.

Viola has been pronounced by many commercial travelers to be the best inland village in the State of Wisconsin. We believe this to be true, and also that the Kickapoo Valley and Northern Railway Co., realizing this, will reach us at the earliest possible date.

Viola is now the northern terminus of the Crawford County telephone line. Two other lines have lately been completed, one of which connects Viola with La Crosse, and the other Viola with Richland Center.





Farm House of F. Hull, near Ia Farge.  
(From a Photograph by C. S. Brown, Ia Farge.)

Almost any industry employing honorable means and serving an honest purpose would thrive among us, but there seems to be an especially good opening here for some factory that would finish wood and manufacture it in that form. The power furnished by the Kickapoo River is unlimited, the wood in its native state at hand, the shipping facilities excellent when the railroad reaches us in the near future. A great deal of poplar wood is shipped from this vicinity to the eastern part of state where it is manufactured into paper. There is no reason why the finished product might not be shipped instead of the raw material.

Beside the business interests so ably cared for by Viola, the educational facilities and social advantages are matters of comment with all visitors.

The first business point reached in traveling up the river from Viola is

### **La Farge.**

Although small at present time, this place is growing in importance. A co-operative store does a large business; also Henry Millard, a son of O. H. Millard, one of the pioneers of the Kickapoo Valley.

A short distance above La Farge we come to an older settlement popularly known as *Seeleyburg*, but more properly as

### **Star.**

The first land entered in this part of Valley was by John Anderson in 1853. As mentioned elsewhere, Mr. Anderson came to the Kickapoo Valley in 1849. He says the country was full

of Indians and game at that time. The game consisted of deer, wolf, bear and elk. Furs were sold at Prairie du Chien. Among the early settlers were Mr. Samuel Green and Richard Lawton who entered land in 1854. These gentlemen claim the honor of cutting the first road into the Town of Stark from the south. Mr. Green is one of the merchants of Star. One of his competitors is Mr. Robert Parker, an old-time resident. The photographer resident at Star is Mr. C. S. Brown.

The village of Star will not seem a familiar place when Mrs. Mariette Blodgett Seeley has passed away. This pioneer woman was born in New York in 1812, April 18. Her parents moved to the "Holland Purchase" on the shores of Lake Erie before the famous battle at which Commodore Perry was victorious, the guns from which she remembers hearing. She was united in marriage with Dempster Seeley in 1843, and immigrated to the Kickapoo Valley in 1863. Mr. Seeley bought three hundred acres of land and a water power from Mr. John Anderson and at once began erecting buildings and preparing for the extensive business so long carried on by him. Mrs. Seeley is a woman of great physical and mental vigor, and possesses the resolution necessary in a pioneer country. This was exemplified in the days when sectional feeling ran high and brother opposed brother. A man of "copperhead" propensities was accused of burning the school house because the children sung patriotic songs. Mrs. Seeley said the school should go on in spite of the "copperheads," and accordingly opened her parlor to the school and boarded the teacher free of charge.

Just where the Kickapoo River winds its way at the base of perpendicular cliffs, covered with mosses, lichens, ferns and evergreens, is situated the little hamlet of

### **Rockton.**

The village was platted in 1870. It is situated on beautiful, undulating bench land, seventy-five feet above the Kickapoo River.

It numbers about twenty families of as kind hearted people as can be found in any community. One of the earliest settlers in this region was Eli McVey who entered land here in 1866. He had been in the Kickapoo Valley for twelve years previous. At about the same time, Mr. Van S. Bennett, the leading business man of the place, settled in Rockton. Mr. Bennett bought out a grist mill which Messrs. Frank Lawton and Jesse Osborne had begun, finishing the same. He also built a saw-mill that year which he operated for twenty years. In 1869, a school house was built by Mr. Bennett and given to the district in order to have one established. Miss Agnes Clift taught the first school. Rockton contains two stores, one kept by Mr. Bennett, the other by Mr. White. Mr. Bennett has associated with him in the flouring mill, Mr. Widmer, a native of Switzerland. He is a well-informed man and an excellent workman. In 1884 this firm built a new flouring mill which enjoys an extensive patronage. A hotel and three machine shops complete the list of business enterprises in Rockton. The I. O. O. F. and the A. F. & A. M. have lodges here.

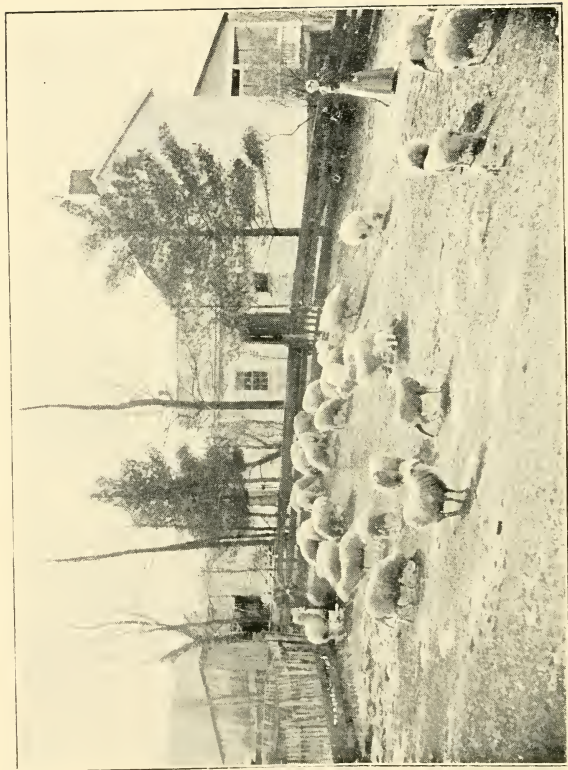
To those wishing to learn more of the advantages enjoyed by this particular locality, such as good timber, pure water, cheap lands of the richest virgin soil, healthful climate, mills, schools and churches, a cordial invitation is extended to correspond with Arnold Widmer, R. P. Dalton, Frank Widmer, Sherman McVey, Hugh Dempsey, or Van S. Bennett, any one of whom will cheerfully answer every question asked.

Twenty-five miles to the north of Viola, lying partly in Monroe and partly in Vernon Counties is the village of

### **Ontario.**

It was laid out and platted by Mr. Giles White, the first settler in this region, in 1857. He had entered the land in 1855. For many years he was actively engaged in lumbering, milling, farming and merchandising. The village has been incorporated for some time. The president is Capt. T. B. Marsden. About four hundred people live in Ontario, and all classes of business are ably and fully represented. Among the early settlers in Ontario was Mr. O. H. Millard who entered land in 1856 and took up permanent residence there in 1857. In 1858, Mr. Millard bought the only stock of goods in the village and kept the only store for a number of years.

Among the civic societies of Ontario, the James Williams Post, Grand Army of the Republic, holds a prominent place. The membership is forty-four, the Commander, David D. Kyes. Connected with them is a Woman's Relief Corps of thirty-five members. The president of this body is Mrs. Martha Sandon,



Residence of M. A. Bacon, Star.  
(From a Photograph by C. S. Brown.

the Senior Vice, Mrs. Emily M. Kyes. These two societies meet in a building of their own.

The I. O. O. F. have long had a flourishing society in Ontario.

Situated about three miles north of Ontario is the hamlet of OIL CITY and about four miles beyond this place lies the village of WILTON. This village is so near to the headwaters of the river as scarcely to merit the sobriquet "Kickapogian." The town is easily reached from outside places by the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, the main line of which passes through it.

Journeying to the south from Viola, a three mile ride brings one to

### **Kickapoo Center.**

This locality is one of the earliest settled in the Valley. Among the first settlers were Robt. Wilson and family. At that time, Kickapoo Center gave promise of being the metropolis of this region, but other places out-distanced it. At present there is little but a post office, a church, and a school to mark the spot.

Two miles below Kickapoo Center is the post office of *Manning*.

Eight miles below Viola is the village of

### **Readstown.**

Daniel Read laid out and platted the village in 1855. There was quite a settlement here at that time. Mr. Read having settled here in 1848, he at once built a saw-mill, and in a few years a grist mill, which is still standing and is now being repaired by Craigo & Pomeroy. The first store was kept by



Wm. Austin. In 1855, Albert Bliss built a store and hotel. The business established by Mr. Bliss has been continued by some member of his family until two years since, when ill health compelled Wm. A. Bliss to remove to Colorado. Mercantile business is carried on in the old stand, however, by John E. Silbaugh.

Perhaps no one on the Kickapoo has been more widely known and universally loved for sterling virtues and kindly disposition than has "Grandma Bliss," the wife of Albert Bliss. Her home for the last few years has been with her daughter in Milwaukee, but every summer found Grandma among her old neighbors and friends. She loved them and loved the scenes where she spent the best years of her life. The sorrow at her death a few days since was as wide spread as her acquaintance had been.

Readstown is at present the northern terminus of the K. V. & N. R. R. We understand it expects to take on a great boom. At this writing, the village contains three general stores, two hotels, a grist mill and a blacksmith shop. The inhabitants number about two hundred and fifty.

### **Soldiers Grove,**

twelve miles below Viola, was laid out in 1866. It was incorporated in 1886, with J. O. Davidson as first president. A mill was built at this point in 1855 by Jos. Brightman.

The growth of Soldiers Grove has not been phenomenal, but has been a steady progression with no retrograde movement. It could not be otherwise



with the energetic and yet careful business men who have been at the helm for a number of years. Soldiers Grove is an example of what may be accomplished in the way of building up a town when the citizens are liberal minded enough to aid public enterprises and to take pride in seeing the community as a whole prosper. The business men of this town have carried out the policy that the interest of each is best served by the prosperity of all. The population is about five hundred, the majority of whom are of Norwegian birth or extraction.

The list of business concerns is a long one. General stores are kept by J. O. Davidson, Oley Knutson, T. Peterson and Wm. Willis. The village post office is kept in the store of Mr. Willis. Mr. Knutson's store is known as the "Pioneer Store." Previous to the establishment of his house, small stocks had been kept by different parties, but Mr. Knutson "has continued to this present time." He is now president of the village of Soldiers Grove.

In addition to the above are two drug stores, two groceries, two hardware stores, three hotels and two or three restaurants. The medical profession is well represented by Dr. Sime, Dr. Dinsdale and Dr. Brown; the legal by Manning & Campbell. The proprietor of the Bank of Soldiers Grove is Atley Peterson. THE ADVANCE, a weekly newspaper, is ably edited by Cole Brothers.

In the manufacturing line we find three saw mills, one grist mill, four blacksmith shops, two wagon factories, an excelsior factory, a cheese factory and a creamery.

Soldiers Grove people prefer light rather than darkness, so on Jan. 1, 1894, the Electric Light Co. was organized. Officers, Atley Peterson, president; Fay P. Briggs, treasurer; T. N. Sime, manager. The power is obtained from the water power of the Soldiers Grove Hardwood Mills. The company owns a plant worth \$2000 exclusive of the power. The incandescent system of lighting is used. On the streets are fifty and thirty-two candle power lights. Practically all the business houses and a great many residences are furnished with electric light.

Soldiers Grove has in times past suffered from disastrous fires. This led to the formation in 1890 of Soldiers Grove Fire Co. No. 1. Its members number twenty-six. They have a hand engine which, together with hook and ladder and 500 feet of hose, cost \$1,100. W. H. Slightum is chief. This department has served the village well on two special occasions. The engine is housed in a fire proof building owned by the village. The upper story is used as a village hall.

With increasing prosperity and good educational and church facilities, the people are contented and happy.

These enterprising people do not feel inclined to erect a Chinese wall around their advantages but will welcome to their midst any legitimate undertaking.

Following down the Kickapoo River from Soldiers Grove brings one to

### **Gays Mills,**

distant from Viola about twenty miles. This is one of



Water-power and mill belonging to J. A. Haggerty, at Gays Mills.

the most promising locations on the Kickapoo River. A saw mill was erected here by Jas. B. Gay as early as 1848. He was attracted by the water power at this point which, having a solid rock foundation together with the reliability of the stream and abundant supply of water, is unsurpassed. At present there is no saw mill here, but the water power is utilized by a flouring mill owned by J. A. Haggerty and operated by J. G. Robb and Frank Only. The mill was erected in 1865 by J. M. Gay, but in 1883 was enlarged from a story and a half in height to three stories. This mill has always done an extensive business and is noted for the excellence of its work. It has a capacity of seventy-five barrels per day and is usually in operation night and day.

There never was any attempt made to found a town here until after the building of the railroad. The village was platted Sept. 19, 1892, by Thos. W. Gay, S. H. Robb, Jas. A. Robb and Orrin P. Rounds, and recorded Dec. 10, 1892. It now has 140 inhabitants.

The leading business firm of the place is The King & Haggerty Co., who deal in general merchandise, and buy and ship grain, live stock, railroad ties, cord wood, etc. D. M. Twining & Son do an extensive business in a lumber yard, this being the only one between Soldiers Grove and Wauzeka. Beside The King & Haggerty Co.'s store there is another general store; also a hardware store, a meat market, a harness shop, wagon shop, gun smithy, blacksmith shop, a butter-tub factory and a creamery.

Gays Mills is very prettily situated, and the region has long been the home of many cultured families.

### **Bell Center,**

two miles below Gays Mills, was once thought to be the coming town, but those who invested money in village property there have reason to be disappointed. Although the home of many good intelligent people, the business outlook is not very bright. The best paying industry of the village is a stave mill owned by a company. A good graded school is maintained. The K. V. & N. R. R. have a platform and warehouse at Bell Center and trains now stop there.

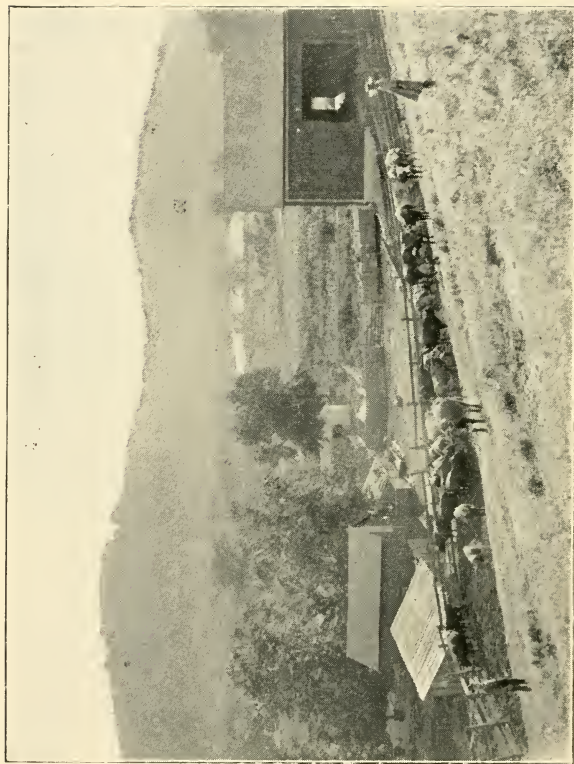
Twenty-four miles south of Viola at

### **Petersburg,**

is a fine location for a town. Its natural advantages are all that could be desired. The Kickapoo Valley is here crossed by a valley extending from the Wisconsin River at Boscobel north westward to the Mississippi River at Lynxville.

Petersburg is the geographical center of Crawford County and has been voted by the County Convention to be the site of the county seat. The legal proceedings are not finished so that no steps have yet been taken toward the erection of the necessary buildings.

A telephone line from Prairie du Chien to Lynxville connects at this point with the one extending up the Kickapoo Valley from Wauzeka. This is the central station of the County. They bridge here for



Barns and Stock of Daniel Lawrence, Petersburg, Wis.



north, south, east and west. A line passing through Mount Sterling runs from Ferryville to Petersburg. The Boscobel line also connects here.

Another advantage given to Petersburg by the Kickapoo River is a fine water power with solid rock foundation. It has not yet been harnessed to machinery and the opportunity is open for some industrious man to make a fortune.

A steam flouring mill has been in operation for some time. One of the best cheese factories in the county is located here. It is owned by Lawrence & Long.

Other enterprises are a saw mill and blacksmith shop.

South of Petersburg the valley becomes narrower and as the river itself is very crooked, the valley is winding. The railroad follows the valley, but in traveling with a team, at certain points one usually crosses the ridge bordering the river, thus shortening the journey.

Wherever a stream enters the river, the bluffs recede, and in the expansions thus formed lie some of the finest farms in the state, notably Haney Valley and Citron Valley. Each of these valleys is shaped like a horse shoe and about six miles in length. No fairer rural scene can be found in any land than a view of Haney Valley showing the fine farm and buildings of J. D. Haskins with a school house and a church conveniently located. Mr. Haskins and Mr. Hamilton of Citron Valley were the first men in this part of the country to import fine stock. Mr. Haskins raises draft horses and short horns, while

Mr. Hamilton raises driving horses and Herefords. Both ship to eastern markets.

Although portions of this region were among the earliest settled and many prosperous farmers occupied the valley, there were no villages between Petersburg and Wauzeka before the advent of the railroad. In 1891 a saw-mill was put in three miles below the mouth of Haney Valley by P. A. Lathrop, and a grocery by C. W. Lathrop.

From this beginning has grown the village of

### **Barnum,**

which was platted in 1892. The population at present numbers one hundred and twenty.

Beside the saw-mill mentioned there is a stave factory and a creamery, the last named being valued at \$3,500 and owned by an association composed of thirty-five farmers. In the mercantile business are two firms with general stocks and one with groceries only.

A society of I. O. O. F. was organized with forty-six members in Nov. 1894, and one of I. O. G. F. with thirty members in 1896. The Odd Fellows own a building which is used for church and Sunday school purposes. Barnum is about twenty-nine miles from Viola.

A journey of about five miles southward from Barnum, in the course of which the ridge is crossed, brings one to the lively little town of

### **Steuben.**

The land now occupied by the village was entered in



1856 or 57 by John T. Farris, by whom Steuben was platted in 1892.

The ever present saw-mill is here duplicated, there being two of them. A planing and feed mill, a creamery, a harness shop, two blacksmith shops, a wagon shop, a hotel, and three general stores, comprise the list of business undertakings.

## Wauzeka

is said to be distant from Steuben in a straight line six miles, by the wagon road ten miles, by rail thirteen, and by the river fifteen. Not having an air ship the writers did the next best thing—traveled the wagon road.

When Mr. A. M. Rosencrans came to Wauzeka in 1846 there was nothing here but a government post for the supply of Ft. Crawford where Prairie du Chien now stands. The post included all of the section on which the village is now built. The first man to take a claim where Wauzeka now stands was John Beary. He soon sold out to John McClurg. We were not able to find out when the village was laid out, but it was incorporated in 1892 with W. A. Chatterton as first president. The present incumbent is Dr. Perrin.

Situated at the mouth of the Kickapoo River and at the junction of the Kickapoo Valley and Northern R. R. with the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul R. R., Wauzeka possesses advantages which are appreciated by her citizens. The usual shops, stores and factories are found here.

One of the most alive enterprises the town possesses is a newspaper edited by Howe & Thompson.

This paper has the euphonious title of *Kickapoo Chief*. The young men who edit it are deserving of much credit for having built up an extensive business in a place where their competitors in other towns prophesied failure.

To the visitor, the most striking feature of the town is the fine artesian wells. There are several of them, one of which throws a stream fifty three feet into the air. The K. V. & N. R. R. Co. own one with a force at the surface of fifteen pounds to the square inch.

Surely there can be no doubt in the minds of the readers of this book as to the Kickapoo Valley being a well-watered region. One has only to recall the numerous springs and brooks and then add the flowing wells which now exist at Wauzeka, Soldiers Grove, Seeleyburg and Oil City to be convinced of the fact.

This necessarily brief review of the time of settlement and of the trading and manufacturing firms of the towns in the Kickapoo Valley shows that the region is far from being a wilderness, and that the inhabitants are not below the average in intelligence and enterprise. The schools, churches and social conditions in general have been reserved for other chapters.

The entire region has been settled for years. The assessed valuation in 1895 of the Townships bordering on or intersected by the Kickapoo River, as equalized by their respective County Boards, is \$1,664,784.05. It is the custom in these counties to assess property at about half its worth; so the real

valuation of property in the Kickapoo Valley is over three million of dollars.

The tide of emigration which has noisily rolled West for twenty years past has distracted attention from this as well as from all other parts of Wisconsin, yet there is no locality on earth in this latitude possessing more or higher advantages for farmers, manufacturers, mechanics or in fact any persons who desire to win honest bread by honest effort.

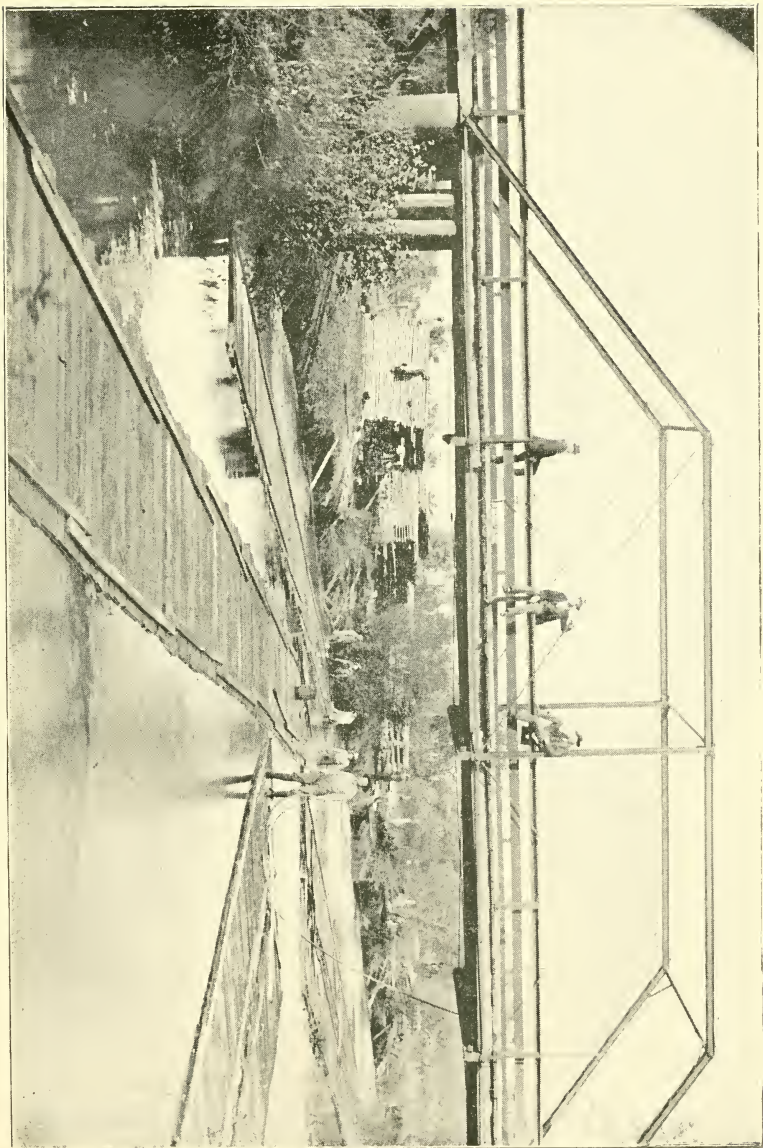
Inquiry was made in person at the Land Office in the Capitol at Madison and the fact corroborated that "Uncle Sam" has no land in the Kickapoo Valley. Persons desiring to locate here will have to purchase or rent real estate. Prices are reasonable and new comers will find the people cordial and hospitable.

## The Railroad.

In the year 1889, a company was incorporated for the purpose of building a railroad through the Kickapoo Valley from mouth to source, under the name of the Kickapoo Valley & Northern Railway Company. The construction of a road-bed was soon afterward commenced and was completed between the village of Wauzeka, at the mouth of the Kickapoo river, to the village of Soldiers Grove, continuing the entire distance, thirty-four miles, in the year 1892. Trains were at once put in active operation over the line, one train each way being run daily, except Sundays, ever since. During the summer of 1896 the line was extended from Soldiers Grove to Readstown, making the entire length of the line thirty-nine miles.

The railroad has been a great blessing to the people of the valley and a large tributary table land on either side. It has developed the country it traverses and the tributaries thereto; it has helped to build up prosperous villages along the route and caused the entire valley to assume greater activity.

The road passes through the very poorest part of the valley, generally hugging the river bank, where the land is low and mostly unsuited for culti-



A typical scene on the Kickapoo River.

vation, yet there are thousands of acres of both valley and table lands on either side that have been partially developed into beautiful, fertile farms, with prosperous happy homes, occupied and owned by a class of people, mostly Americans, who are honest, intelligent, industrious, progressive, religious and patriotic.

Some twenty years ago a survey was made from Wauzeka to Tomah, and a narrow gauge grade was built through to Bloomingdale, that being the end of the work and the project; but why the untimely demise of so useful and laudable an enterprise, the writers are unable to say. Large corporations controlling old established lines, finally built railroads all around us and forced the trade to go to them, and also advanced every discouragement and placed every obstacle possible in the way of all efforts to build a railroad through the Kickapoo Valley. The people imbued with the spirit of thrift and progression, naturally possessed strong convictions that the time would come when railroad facilities would be their next door neighbor and through every discouragement held tenaciously to their faith. The years rolled by until the 2nd day of May, 1889, when the Kickapoo Valley & Northern Railway Company was organized under the laws of the State of Wisconsin, to build and maintain a railroad through the Kickapoo Valley. The incorporators of the company were E. I. Kidd, of Prairie du Chien; W. H. Bennett, of Baraboo; B. F. Washburn, of Excelsior; Ole H. Dahl, of Soldiers Grove; J. O. Davidson, of Soldiers Grove; A. C. V. Elston, of

Muscoda, and W. S. Manning, of Muscoda.

The first survey was made immediately after the organization in 1889, from Wauzeka to Readstown. At the election of officers in 1890, E. R. Burpee, of Bangor, Maine, was made president and the former officers were re-elected. The survey was then continued through to Wilton. There was great rejoicing along the proposed line and exclamations of the good time is coming were heard on all sides, but the work progressed slowly and sometimes with uncertainty.

During the years 1891 and 1892 the road was built and equipped from Wauzeka to Soldiers Grove. The first trains began running May 29, 1892, and shortly after the railroad company received the contract for carrying United States mail; the United States Express Company also established offices along the new line and have done a thriving business ever since.

From July 1st, 1892, to June 30th, 1893, there were 25,985,016 pounds of freight handled on this road, of which, 21,921,881 pounds originated on that line and 4,063,135 pounds came from the connecting line. During the corresponding twelve months of 1895 and 1896, there were 41,763,375 pounds of freight handled, of which 37,334,543 pounds originated on the K. V. & N. line and 4,428,832 pounds came from the connecting line, a gain in the amount of business over the first year of 15,798,359 pounds, or about 40 per cent. increase.

The track is standard guage; the road bed is smooth and in first-class condition, and the iron



monster now comes daily puffing and snorting up and down the Kickapoo Valley, bearing human life, products of the soil and human skill to their respective destinations, and the rumble of the car wheel is sweet music to those who have so long waited for its advent.

The extension of the Kickapoo Valley & Northern Railway from Readstown to Viola is practically assured by the company's managers and this fact is stimulating business and trade conditions at Viola and still further up the valley. Much timber is being gotten out and large fertile farms carved out of our heavy forests.



## Manufacturing Industries.

The chief industry of the Kickapoo Valley is to-day what it has been from the beginning, agriculture, although other profitable and important industries are continually springing up.

The first source of income to the pioneer was from the product of our magnificent forests, and the timber and lumber business have at all times been an extensive and profitable industry of the people. Our first settlers were hardy easterners and they immigrated West to build homes for their families and lay up fortunes. This valley was at that time so thickly wooded it was difficult for a footman to penetrate it. The industrious pioneer concluded that where such dense forests grew a very fertile soil must feed them, and their reasoning was well founded as has since been proven. The variety of timber found here has been mentioned in a preceding chapter, an abundance of which, especially the hard wood, remains yet and is of good size and excellent quality.

Early settlers immediately set about the laborious task of laying low the forest, converting the trees into logs which they floated down the Kickapoo River and on to the Mississippi to Iowa and points

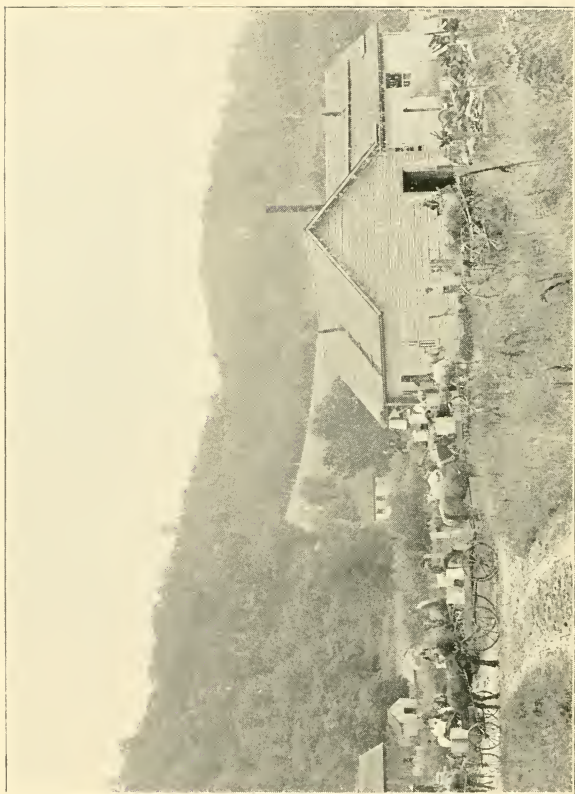
south, where they found a good market. In the course of time sawmills were imported and located at different points along the river, which affords ample water power for manufacturing purposes. These mills manufactured logs into many different grades of lumber, which was rafted out and disposed of as the finished product at remunerative prices. Today the whole valley is dotted with steam saw mills, in addition to the regular water power mills, which furnish labor for many hundred men and produce various kinds of lumber and timber that met with ready sale. The great drawback to this timber industry, is that the lumber is very much injured by water when rafted to market, and the distance to haul to the railroad has been so great that it could not be handled with sufficient profit against competing sections where railroad facilities have aided them.

Railroad ties are handled extensively, many firms buying from 40,000 to 125,000 ties yearly and rafting them down the Kickapoo River. A. C. Cushman & Sons of Viola, for many years owned and operated two saw mill plants located at different points in Viola, and from their books we learn that they handled many thousands every year and some years over 100,000 ties, besides a large log and lumber business. The Cushman estate now operate these mills which are typical of those along the river and all over the valley. We also find stave and heading mills, excelsior mills and hoop-pole factories. A. J. McCarty has a hoop-pole factory and cooper shop in Viola and does a good business annually, manufacturing and shipping many thousand hoops yearly

and makes and ships a large number of barrels which net him a neat sum. Huffinan Brothers have recently located a stave and sawmill in Viola and are prepared to handle thousands of feet of lumber and hundreds of thousands of stave bolts.

A very valuable industry is the flouring mills and we find one or more at almost every village in the valley. These are without exception the best improved system of roller mills and draw to each point of location a large trade from a great scope of country. In Viola we have two roller flouring mills. The A. C. Cushman estate owns one with a capacity of 100 barrels per day and Wm. J. Waggoner is proprietor of the other which has a capacity of 35 barrels. These compare favorably with other mills spoken of at the different towns of the valley in another chapter. The products of these mills are found on sale in every village and town in the valley and also in the towns and villages up on the high lands and many miles out of the valley where they come in direct competition with the products of other mills, but their fine qualities keep them at par with other brands and they find ready sale at all times.

As a dairy country the Kickapoo Valley cannot be surpassed in Wisconsin, and our citizens are rapidly drifting in that direction. The hillsides are being cleared of underbrush and converted into grazing lands, which, rid of the undergrowth, yield an abundance of wholesome grasses that are relished by cattle and they thrive as well or better upon these grass lands as they do upon clover meadows. New creameries



Warner's Cheese Factory, near Viola.

and cheese factories are annually being built, containing the latest improved machinery and operated by men skilled in butter and cheese making. A number of these are with both kinds of machinery, making this industry profitable the entire year, and manufacture the product which brings to their patrons the best returns. The cheese factory at Viola is owned by J. C. Hull, and W. N. Miller is the cheese maker. This factory is only operated during the summer season, but the dairy men keep it busy during that part of the year. The number of pounds of milk delivered at this factory in 1895 was 827,845; number of pounds cheese made, 83,030; amount of money received, \$5,985.05; the average price per pound being \$0.072.

Ontario is one of the many Kickapoo villages that has a creamery with a capacity of 6,000 pounds of milk per day and we were informed that within a radius of six miles of that village five cheese factories were located.

The census reports for 1895 show the value of milch cows in the towns through which the Kickapoo River passes to be \$163,222; the number of pounds of butter made, 700,449; value of butter, \$85,964. The total number of cattle and calves in these towns was 17,548 valued at \$212,155.

Although not as many sheep are to be found in the Kickapoo country as there used to be when wool commanded a good price, yet it is no poor showing by any means. During the year 1895 our sheep numbered 52,834 and produced a wool clip of 127,604 pounds, which at the former price of wool would

have netted our sheep growers the neat sum of over \$30,000 besides the natural increase of the herds.

Our farmers raise a few hogs occasionally as the following figures will show: The town above mentioned raised 31,017 hogs in 1895 and their market value was over \$265,170. To feed this stock upon we produced in these towns in 1895, 307,342 bushels of corn; 592,335 bushels of oats and of wheat 132,776 bushels. These figures show that our people are industrious, prosperous, intelligent, capable of conducting their business as ably as those in other sections with greater opportunities.

Tobacco is raised in portions of the valley in paying quantities. Soldiers Grove has a tobacco warehouse which is used for sorting and storing tobacco and a large force of men are employed for this work during the winter months. E. H. Gochenaur is proprietor of the Viola Cigar factory which manufactures from 60,000 to 100,000 cigars annually. Seven different brands are made and disposed of as fast as they are ready for market.

The numerous iron and steel bridges that span the Kickapoo River from source to mouth are a product of the valley almost wholly. With few exceptions, Timmerman Brothers, of Ontario, constructed these bridges, and from Mr. Herman Timmerman we obtained our information in regard to this industry. Some twenty years ago Herman and Delbert Timmerman formed a partnership under the name of Timmerman Brothers, and built most of the wooden bridges across the upper Kickapoo, closely following that time, but have since replaced them with sub-

stantial iron and steel bridges in many instances. In the fall of 1895 Delbert Timmerman died, and since that time the other brother has been sole proprietor and continued the business as before. All iron is bought in the rough and is cut and fitted at the shop in Ontario, where all plans, drafts and estimates are made. And the old Kickapoo river turns the wheels that drill the steel. From six to ten men are employed the entire year. There are more iron and steel bridges across the Kickapoo River than any other stream of its length in Wisconsin.

## Agricultural Products.

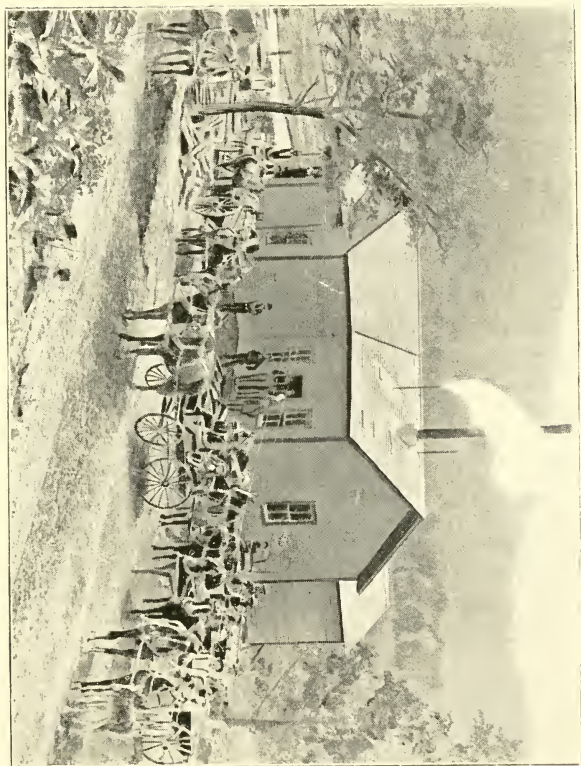
The soil in the Kickapoo Valley is a sandy loam and on either side is clay. The growing season opens about the first of April and closes about October first, giving ample time for all crops to mature.

Any of the products of the middle temperate zone thrive in the Kickapoo Valley. The farmer has, therefore, a wide range from which to choose.

Each raises a variety of vegetables for his own consumption and for marketing. The principal crop, however, is feed for stock—corn, oats and hay, together with some millet and barley. Fall wheat is also grown. Potatoes are an important crop. Many farmers sow peas for feeding to hogs.

Whatever kind of seed is put into the ground is sure to bring a bountiful return. Corn produces from 40 to 60 bushels to the acre, oats from 50 to 80, hay from 1½ to 3 tons, clover about 2, millet from 3 to 5 tons, wheat and rye from 15 to 30 bushels. Two crops of hay are sometimes cut in one year. Potatoes produce from one to three hundred bushels per acre. Clover seed is a profitable crop, about two bushels to the acre being the average. The hay raised in the valley is almost always timothy, while on the uplands it is a mixture of timothy and clover or clover alone.





Cheese Factory at Barnum, Wis.

The advantages for stock raising cannot be over-estimated. The abundance of nutritious grass which grows everywhere, the hills which keep off the strong winds and prevent snow drifts in winter, and the fact that there is scarcely a quarter section of land in the whole valley that has not on it living water, all combine to make the Kickapoo Valley one of the best regions for live stock in the United States.

Cattle and hogs are most numerous although sheep and horses are extensively raised. The climate and soil are peculiarly adapted to sheep, foot-rot and scab being unknown among them. The hillsides seem just suited to them and the higher they can get the better they like it. Notwithstanding this, the low price at which wool has been for the past few years has driven many farmers out of the sheep industry. Dairy stock is taking the place of sheep. There are many herds of Jersey cattle in the Kickapoo Valley and scarcely a farmer but has from one to five. Mr. John Sellars, near Viola, has a fine herd of Herefords.

Beside the cattle raised for dairying purposes many are raised for shipping. Hull Bros. and Anderson Bros., both of Viola, within last ten months have shipped about 100 car loads of live stock, mostly cattle and hogs.

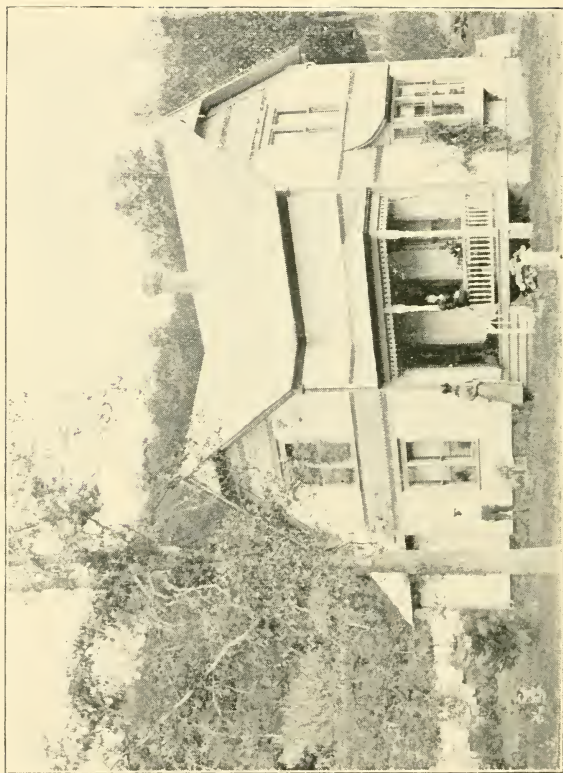
Among the fruits, the small varieties of apples do well in the lowlands and the large varieties on the high land. Plums, grapes and all kinds of berries are native, the cultivated sorts producing excellent crops.

Last but not least either in quantity or quality is honey. The Kickapoo Valley is noted as being the

best honey producing region in south-western Wisconsin. In twenty-one years, there has been but one failure. The average crop is 100 pounds to the colony. The main honey-producing plants in the valley are basswood and white clover.

Mr. A. J. McCarty, proprietor of Viola Apiary, is the owner of about two hundred and fifty colonies.

In short, no more productive country can be found in this state. There is practically not an unproductive acre, and farmers looking for a new location, where crops are sure, and soil capable of supporting anything he may choose to grow, will do well to examine the Kickapoo Valley.



Residence and Apiary of A. J. McCarty, Viola, Wis.  
(From a Photograph by E. O. Sloulin.)

## Religious History.

Fifty years have elapsed since the first settlement in what is called the Kickapoo Country, yet religious meetings are found among the records of these primitive settlers. In some instances the first services were held at the homes of members, but soon meeting houses were erected, and these first churches were invariably built of logs, some of which were unhewn.

It was in these rude houses that those today who are the worshipers of Him, who gave his son to die for a perishing world, had the foundation of their faith laid. Let us ever cherish a fond remembrance of the pioneer mother and father who settled in this valley, and through their love for the "Rose of Sharon" and the "Lily of the Valley" have given us a type of Christianity that should never be effaced. The poet hath well said:

When we see the flower seed wafted  
From the nurturing mother tree,  
Tell we can, wherever planted,  
What the harvesting will be;  
Never from the blasting thistle  
Was there gathe'd golden grain:  
Thus the seal the child receiveth  
From its parents will remain.

The truth of the above has been verified in the descendents of the pioneer settlers of this valley. Hundreds of structures with all the modern conveniences, now have taken the place of the rude houses of the pioneers, and are filled each first day of the week with devout worshippers. The Sunday Schools, Epworth Leagues, Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor and mid-week prayer meetings all proclaim to the world, the moral and religious character of the present inhabitants of the Kickapoo Valley. We herewith submit a brief summary of the church work as taken from the records at the points where churches are established throughout the valley—and this does not permit of a fair showing, for many residents of the valley have their membership with churches on the ridges and they are not included in this list. However, the point we wish to prove is that the gospel has been preached in this valley and a glorious response has been the result for the past forty years or more.

The following denominations are represented by organizations: Adventist, Baptist, Congregational, Christian, Catholic, Methodist, United Brethren and Lutheran.

The first organized class at Viola, was the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the year 1858. Rev. G. W. Nuzum was the preacher in charge with John Fuller as leader of nine members, viz: John Fuller and wife, Salma Rogers and wife, Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Turner, Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Hull and Mrs. Lyman Jackson.

The erection of the church was commenced in the spring of 1877, under charge of Rev. A. F. Thompson,

pastor, and Rev. J. D. Searls, presiding elder. The first board of trustees elected was R. A. Tubbs, Dr. R. H. DeLap, J. B. Snow, G. H. Tate and Wm. J. Waggoner. The present membership of this church is 33. Valuation of church property \$1,200. A Sunday School has always been well supported here. A society of Christian Endeavor was organized on March 24, 1890, by Rev. Scoville, with twenty-five active and ten associate members. The first officers were; Rose B. Poff, president; Frank Lepley, secretary; John Lowrey, treasurer. The society now has twenty-nine active and nine associate members. \$213.83 have been raised by them which have been divided between home and foreign mission after paying their incidental expenses. The Methodists have been the only church organization here, although Evangelists from different societies have preached here at various times, until January, 1895, the Christians organized a class of twenty members; they have no house of worship, but have supported a preacher for one-fourth of his time during the past year, and have purchased a lot valued at \$150.00, on which to build a church. The next point above Viola where we find churches and regular services, is Star; here we find a Methodist Church was organized in 1867, by C. M. Cunningham, and the first pastor sent from conference was Rufus Fancher. In 1871, a church was built which is valued at \$1,200. Their membership is 40. A flourishing Sunday School is found here and other auxiliaries of church work. The Seventh Day Adventists, also have a church at this place, which was organized July 19, 1890, with 22





Hopewell Church near Viola.

United Brethren Church at Ontario.

Lutheran Church at Soldiers Grove.

Roman Catholic Church at Wauzeka.

Methodist Episcopal Church at Viola.

members and R. J. White, church elder. Their members now number 55; the church property is valued at \$800.00. From here we go up the valley to Ontario, where we find several religious societies in and near the village. The Baptist is the oldest organization. This dates back to January 15, 1859, with Rev. B. S. Tuttle, organizer and ten charter members, viz: Mr. and Mrs. M. V. Stedman, Martin Curtis, Mrs. Caroline White, Mrs. Ellen Sandon, Robert Sandon, Wm. Sandon, Samuel Groyn, Sarah Severeign and Martha Stedman. From February 12, 1871, until May, 1885, the pastor was W. F. Philips, and it was with great sorrow the announcement of his death, which occurred April 4, 1893, was received. The members now number 38 in this church and the Christian Endeavor Society which was organized April 5, 1894, has a membership of 40. Mr. E. L. Duxbury, is president of this prosperous society. The Sunday School at this church has an average attendance of 50. The church is an old one and the building is only valued at \$800.00. The Christian Church at this point is some two or three miles out of the village, and we were unable to examine the records, but gained the information that this denomination organized a class many years ago and now have 40 members on the church book. Wm. Downing is superintendent of the Sunday School at this church and reports 35 scholars as attending the school. The Christian Endeavor Society of this church has 30 active members of which L. Boldon is president. The church is worth \$1,200. The United Brethren organized at Ontario in 1891, by Elder A. W. Whitney;

the society possesses a fine new building which was dedicated February 16, 1896. The estimated cost of the house is \$1,800.00; their members number 67 and this church has service twice every Sunday. A Young People's Christian Union was organized in the spring of 1896, with Mr. Ed. Stackman, president. The society meets every Sunday at 7 p. m. Sunday School at this church is attended by about 30 scholars. Three miles east of Viola, on Camp Creek, is a church which was built by the Baptist Society more than 25 years ago, and for many years a prosperous class met and worshiped there, but removal and death took off almost the entire list of members; services were discontinued and the church house run down. About six years ago the Christian church repaired the house, organized a class and have held services there once a month regularly. In the spring of 1896 the Congregational Society, through the efforts of Evangelist John Willan, organized a class at this point and they meet and hold their services in this same house, at least once a month. This church property is worth about \$600. One of the early religious societies of this section was a class which was organized in the 50's and met some two miles east of Viola, in what is known as Bender's Hollow; this class has moved on to the ridge and organized as the United Brethren Church; in 1889 a church edifice costing about \$2,000 was built, a picture of which will be found in this book as the Hopewell United Brethren Church. The membership here is 60. Going down the valley from Viola we find at Kickapoo, some four miles distant, that

Elder Isaac Sanborn organized the Seventh Day Adventist's class in 1871, which now numbers 43 members. In 1881, the present church building was erected at a cost of \$1,000. Two or three miles from Kickapoo in a settlement which has a post office named Manning, is a new church that has not been dedicated. It is the First Congregational Church and the class was organized by Rev. Dixon, of Viroqua; Wm. Crawford, of Sparta; Philo Hitchcock, of West Salem; Wm. A. Griffith, Lynxville; Homer H. Carter, Beloit and C. H. Merrill, July 10, 1895, and in less than a year a good house was erected; the members number 20 and the Sunday School has an average attendance of 40; the church property is valued at \$600. Readstown is about four miles below Manning, and the Methodist Episcopal Church has sent ministers to Readstown since the time the village was laid out. A class was organized in 1876 by Rev. McMillan who now resides on Fancy Creek. A re-organization was made by Jas. Phelps in 1881, with 17 members and in 1882, the present house of worship was erected. The lot had been deeded to the M. E. Church in 1860, by Daniel Read. The church property is valued at about \$400.

The Olive Branch Christian Church, was organized at Readstown, July 22, 1866, by J. Mark, Jacob Felton, Samuel Poff, and John J. Poff. Dr. C. M. Poff was the first clerk. This society owned a church a mile or more out of the village where they met for several years, but later moved their church furnishings into a building erected by the Methodist people and both the Christians and Methodists worshiped

in this house for years. A re-organization was made March 15, 1896, by Elder McNees and Elder Jones, with 22 members. At Soldiers Grove an M. E. church was organized in 1861, by Rev. Brakman of West Wisconsin conference with about 15 members. In 1879, a re-organization was made by Rev. D. Gander with 12 members; the church was again re-organized in 1891, by Nathan Bradley with 3 members. The present membership is 60; a spacious house of worship has been erected, the corner stone was laid August 8, 1892, and first service held in the church January 1, 1893. \$1,800 is the valuation of the property. There is an Epworth League in connection with the church, also a Junior League of 28 members. In the 70's Soldiers Grove had another church organization. A United Brethren church was organized by Rev. John Day. A Sunday School organization has been continuous at this place since 1861, and there has always been a preaching point there. The Lutheran society at Soldiers Grove have a large prosperous congregation and membership; their church edifice is one of the finest in the valley and cost over \$4000. This church has a Sunday School and other auxiliaries of church and religious worship. The number of members we did not learn. In September, 1871, Rev. P. Valentine, of Mount Sterling, organized a Congregational church with a membership of 10, at Gays Mills. The present society was organized in February, 1894, by Rev. E. W. Jenney, of Boscobel. An M. E. church was organized at Gays Mills, in 1858, by T. C. Clendenning with about 25 members, but two years previous to this date the La

Crosse district sent Rev. John Knibbs to this point and he preached in the house of W. A. Tallman, and there has been services by some orthodox minister, every alternate week since at this place.

The Methodist Episcopal church was first organized at Belle Center, in 1858, by Rev. Wm. McMillen, with John P. Coleman, as class leader; it was then in the Mount Sterling circuit. A large society is reported at that place and a church valued at \$600. Haney Valley reports an M. E. church, organized by Rev. Dixon in 1891; present membership 35, and a flourishing Sunday School. At Barnum, Sunday School and preaching services are held in Odd Fellow's Hall, organized during the summer of 1896, by Mr. Wheeler, with Rev. Bliss the present preacher. Steuben, supports a Sunday School and the Congregational society furnish a preacher at this point at the present time. There is no church building in the village.

Wauzeka, has three large church buildings, owned by the Evangelical Association Church, the German Lutheran's and the Catholics. The first named society was organized in 1866, with 18 members. The building was erected in 1874. It was sold to the German Lutheran's in 1885 and a new house built in 1890, at a cost of \$1,500. This church supports a Sunday School. Rev. Rockits organized the class. The German Lutherans have a strong church class and Sunday School and their property is worth \$1000.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, Catholic Church was built in 1881. About 30 families have a membership in this church. The church building is valued at \$1,500.

Among the professed Christians, some of whom are most active in good works, are many hundreds whose names are not found on the books of any church, there being no society of the denomination preferred by them. Throughout the valley, the entire length of which is 80 miles, we have a church membership of about 1,500, and the church property is valued at something over \$20,000. It would be difficult to give an adequate idea of the amount of good these religious societies accomplish annually. There is scarcely a person in the entire valley that has not, or, cannot have the opportunity of attending one or more church services every week.



## Public Schools.

The first schools in the Kickapoo Valley were essentially primitive. The first teachers were, like most of the other inhabitants, persons who had come West with the tide of emigration, intending to build up their fortunes. The first schools established were pay schools, that is, the patrons employed the teachers and payed them for their services. Free public schools, such as we have now, could not have been established. The inhabitants could not rely upon any public money to support schools, as the tax-gathers and the treasurer were not then commissioned to do business. There are no records of the pioneer schools, but some of the earliest inhabitants have been interviewed and inform us that during the early days schools were conducted in residences; and later rude structures were built of logs. The first school taught in Viola, was by Miss Helen Jackson, in the winter 1854 55, in a log cabin, with the total number of pupils five.

The necessity of establishing schools for the education of the young, was soon felt and appreciated. so, as the pioneer progressed, districts were formed and the rude structures with their homely furniture were gradually supplanted by more modern styled

ones with comfortable equipments, and as is evidenced there was never lack of energy or interest among the people in the work of establishing and maintaining a good system of education throughout the Kickapoo Valley. From the little school of five pupils that met in the log cabin in Viola, has grown the present high school, which is the pride of the district and the admiration of all who visit our village. This school is attended by 200 pupils; the school house is a solid brick two story building with basement; it contains four large school rooms, besides commodious halls that are modern in all their appointments. The building is heated with furnaces, properly equipped with apparatus and a good library. This magnificent school property cost our tax payers over \$6,000. Great pride and interest is taken in procuring first-class instructors and a liberal amount is annually appropriated for teachers wages, apparatus, improvements and incidental expenses. The course of study as prescribed by the state superintendent of public instruction for free high schools is used, and each year we see a number of our young people passing the portals of our school for the last time as pupils. Twenty-five per cent. of the graduates of this school have entered higher institutions of learning, while at least fifty per cent. became teachers in our district schools and among the remaining we find useful and prominent citizens engaged in different positions of trust and honor. We feel that the early training in our schools have been stepping stones to their success.

In almost every village in the Kickapoo Valley, school facilities are nearly equal to those at Viola.



Wauzeka Graded School. District School near Viola. Soldiers Grove Graded School.

We find graded schools at Ontario, Rockton, La Farge, Readstown, Soldiers Grove, Gays Mills, Belle Center and Wauzeka. We have the pictures of most of these school houses contained herein, together with the picture of a district school house, which is a fair representative of the district school houses in the valley, and we are proud to say that these schools are in every particular superior to those in older settled and better developed places, reflecting great credit and praise to the patrons and tax payers of the Kickapoo Valley.

Of the schools in Vernon County, which are situated in the Kickapoo Valley, the superintendent of schools for that county furnishes the following information

"There are eight school houses in Vernon County, on the Kickapoo river road. The cash value of the school houses and sites as reported by town clerks is \$8,650.00. The cash value of school apparatus is \$500.00. The La Farge school house is the finest school building in the county outside of Viroqua and I doubt if any village in the state has a nicer school house. Thirty-four have graduated from the course of study for common schools during the last four years. The above information is for the schools situated on the river road only. The schools along the Kickapoo compare favorably with the schools in other parts of the county. The people take great interest in education and are willing to do all they can to make the schools along the Kickapoo equal to any of the common schools of the state."

That portion of Crawford County lying in the

Kickapoo Valley proper, has three graded and twenty-one district schools. Last year four graduated from the graded and ten from the district schools. Within the last two years 12 from these particular schools have attended higher institutions of learning, and the superintendent of schools of Crawford informs us that twenty per cent of the teachers in Crawford County are residents of the Kickapoo Valley. Valuation of the twenty-one district schools is \$12,600, of the three graded is \$5,700. The valuation of school property in Richland County, located in the Kickapoo Valley—the river and valley only cross a small corner of the town of Forest—is about \$10,000, and the value of all school property in the valley, which includes the furniture and apparatus, is estimated at \$50,000. Many of the people who reside in the valley are in school districts, where the school houses are located on the ridges and such, are not included in this account.

In summing the matter up we find thirty-seven school districts throughout the valley, each of which maintains a school from six to nine months in the year. The wages paid to teachers in district schools range from \$25 to \$40 per month and in graded schools from \$50 to \$80 per month. Wages paid to teachers each year will aggregate nearly \$15,000. The amount of taxes raised for the maintenance of the Viola schools in 1895, and liquidation of outstanding indebtedness, aside from state, county and town fund, was \$1,950 which amounts to, with other taxes raised, about  $4\frac{1}{3}$  per cent of the assessed valuation. This should be convincing evidence that our



Viola High School.

La Farge Graded School.  
Readstown Graded School.



tax-payers are most liberal in their appropriations for educational purposes.

A large number of men and women who are natives of the Kickapoo and received their early education in this valley are now filling responsible positions in this and other states where they rank among the brightest and most capable citizens. We contribute our portion of brain and enterprise that are constantly in demand to fill the responsible vocations which are annually calling for capable men and women.

This great nation prides herself in the free school system which promotes morality and the diffusion of knowledge among our people. It is through this mighty system that schools were planted in the wilderness and have been so signally preserved and improved for us until the present hour and they will continue in all their vigor, strength and beauty for countless generations to come. A higher respect for these institutions, a deeper reverence of law, a closer attention to the requirements of good citizenship, a wider inculcation of the spirit of charity, forbearance and good will to all, and a more constant and earnest endeavor for the enlightenment and advancement of all our people is daily instilled in the minds of the rising generation.



## Representative Men.

In the forty-eight years since Wisconsin was admitted to Statehood the Kickapoo Valley has furnished her share of the state legislators. The records show that twelve different men who were residents of the Kickapoo, represented the citizens of this Valley in the legislative halls of this commonwealth of Wisconsin, from one to four terms each. To these, and others who have achieved distinction in affairs of state, we desire to pay tribute. These chosen representatives from among the sturdy citizens of the Kickapoo, whose energy and ambitions led them over many miles of measureless wilderness, to plant the germs of enterprise and progress in fertile Kickapoo, took their places among the rank and file of Wisconsin legislators, and were always found zealously and untiringly working for the success of commendable enterprise and the advancement of state government. Some of these personages have long since completed their life work and passed to the unknown realms beyond, and it was with great difficulty that the most meagre sketches of them have been obtained.

The Kickapoo Valley's first representative in the

legislature of Wisconsin, was J. L. Jackson, who was a pioneer of the Kickapoo Valley, and settled where the prosperous village of Viola now stands. He was chosen from this place to represent Richland County, and served in that capacity in that august body in 1859 and 1860.

Mr. Jackson was a native of New York State, and was born February 23rd, 1817. In May 1840 he was married to Pheobe Turner, in East Aurora, New York. He made his home in Strykersville, that state until 1854, when he immigrated to Wisconsin and settled on the Kickapoo. In 1861 Mr. Jackson removed to California, but only remained two years, when he came back to Wisconsin and located in Dane County. He died Feb. 20, 1891 at Oregon, Wisconsin.

Albert Bliss, of Readstown, Vernon County, was the next law maker from the Kickapoo and he was elected Assemblyman three successive terms, 1864 to '67. Albert Bliss was born in Calias township, Vermont, December 26, 1811. He left Vermont when quite a young man. Lived in Pennsylvania and New York states for some years, then moved to Wisconsin, living at Platteville from 1847 until he moved to Vernon, or, then Bad Axe County, in the fall of '54. He died at Viroqua June 12, 1888.

Mr. Bliss and his posterity have been prominently identified with Readstown and every interest of that village since 1854 when he settled there. The various offices of trust and honor in the village have been

handed down from father to son for three generations, and to-day the largest and most substantial business house in Readstown is known as the "Bliss store." The principal hotel and lodging house at this date—and the village is enjoying a railroad boom—is the hotel built by Albert Bliss, in 1855, and it is identical in size and arrangement as first constructed, is in good state of preservation and a wonder to all who see it that such a house was built in that early day. Parker Bliss, son of Albert, was proprietor of his hostelry many years after his father, and by travelers it was long looked upon as the Mecca of the Kickapoo, the comfort and protection of that house and the viands served to the travellers often being spoken of very highly. It is now in the hands of strangers, but is called the "Bliss House."

Belle Center, in Crawford County, claims the distinction of being the resident place of the next Kickapoo representative. His name is Wm. Raymond, and he served in the legislature of this State in 1870. Aside from the fact that he was a prominent business man of that hamlet, we are unable to learn anything further.

Wm. H. Evan's name stands on the list as the next Kickapoo representative. His home was at Yankeetown, and he was elected on the democratic ticket to represent Crawford County in the assembly of 1873-4. He was born in Virginia, Nov. 3, 1842. In 1860 he came to Clayton, Crawford County, Wisconsin. He enlisted as a private in Company D., 31st Wisconsin Infantry, and served his term of en-

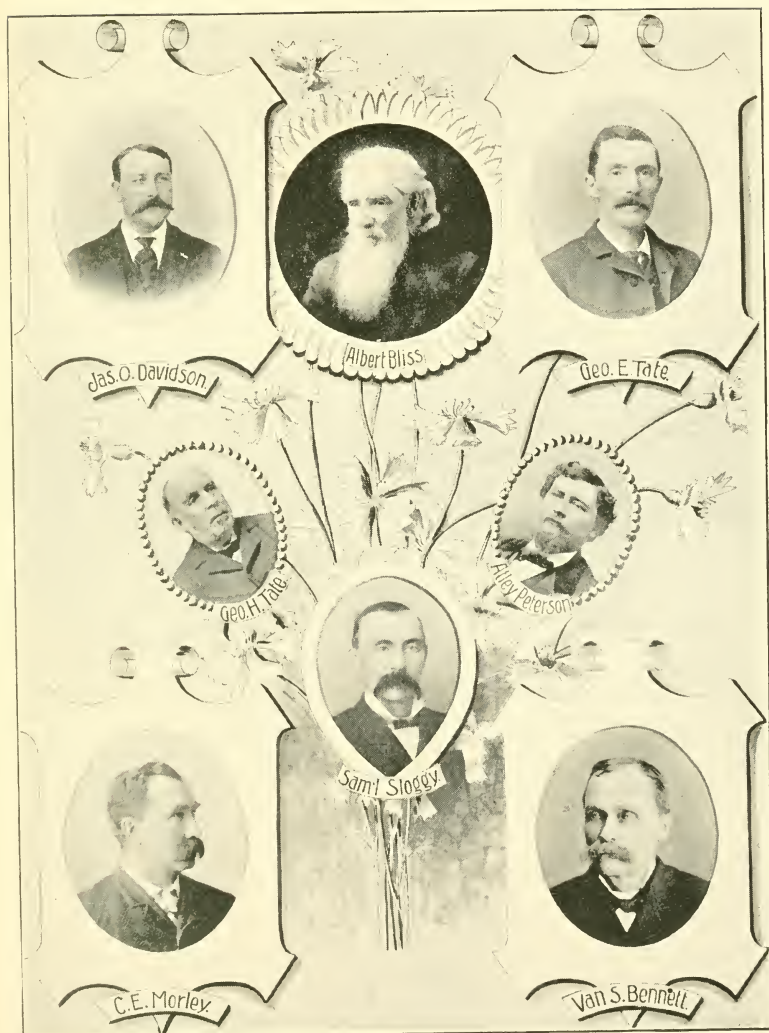
listment. He studied law and was admitted to the bar circuit court at Prairie du Chien in May, 1873. As district attorney he served Crawford County three terms.

Henry H. Wyatt, who served as a representative of the Kickapoo Country in the state legislature in 1877, was a general merchant, at Star, Vernon County. We are unable to furnish anything more as a record of Mr. Wyatt, which we very much regret.

Allen Rusk, who was assemblyman from 1878 to '81, may be termed among the early settlers of the town of Liberty, Vernon County, from which place he was elected. He was born in Ohio on the 6th day of February, 1825, and thirty years later came to Wisconsin, settled first in Grant County, but within a year or little more moved to Vernon County. Mr. Rusk's high standing in the community where he lived is best shown by the statement that he was elected chairman of the town board of Liberty, and justice of the peace, was postmaster for a number of years and various local offices, besides representing his district in two terms of state legislature. Mr. Rusk is a republican in politics and has always voted that ticket since the party's organization. He is a brother of the late Jeremiah M. Rusk. He was a member of Company D., 4th regiment, Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, and served until mustered out of service, participating in all engagements of his regiment. He has retired from work and resides in Viroqua.

Atley Peterson occupies a prominent place among republicans and business men, not only in the Kickapoo Valley, but throughout the State of Wisconsin. He is a banker by occupation, but has interests in the lumbering, also flouring mill business at Soldiers Grove, his home, where he now stands as one of the leading men among her foremost citizens, and any one in Soldiers Grove will say that the advancement of that progressive community has been aided to a great extent through the enterprise and public spirit of Mr. Peterson. He is a native of Norway, was born at Lerdal, February 21, 1847; with his parents he came to Wisconsin in 1852 and settled in Vernon County. In 1853 moved to Crawford County; he received a common school and commercial college education in Crawford County and Madison, Wisconsin. He was postmaster in Soldiers Grove from 1869 to 1886; was elected member of the assembly in 1879-'80-'81-'82; was chairman of the town of Clayton for four years and was chairman of the county board of supervisors; was elected railroad commissioner for the State of Wisconsin in 1886 on the republican ticket; he has repeatedly been a delegate from his county to congressional and state conventions. He is a self made man and has by his own energies and exertions built himself up to be a man of influence and worth, and has to the fullest extent the confidence and respect of the entire community.

Thomas Curley is found among the representative men of the Kickapoo, and when a resident of Belle Center, Crawford County, was elected to the assembly for two successive terms. He claims the



Emeraled Isle as his birth place, and was born May 8th, 1825; immigrated to the United States in 1851 and settled at St. Louis, but removed to Wisconsin in 1867, settling at Mt. Sterling, thence to the town of Haney, village of Belle Center. He entered the military service as a volunteer in 1860 as first lieutenant in the southwest battallion of Missouri, having previously been an active member and officer of several militia companies. In 1861 he again enlisted in the volunteer service of the United States and was commissioned major of the 7th Missouri infantry, was promoted in May, 1862, as lieutenant colonel, and in July was called home to recruit, raising the 27th infantry of which he was made colonel; participated in the capture of Vicksburg, Jackson, battles Lookout Mountain, Mission Ridge, with Sherman in his march to the sea, Resaca, Dallas, Kenesaw Mountain, Janesboro, Lovejoy, Stanton, capture of Savannah and Fort McAllister, also the capture of Charleston and Columbia and many other minor campaigns; was commissioned brigadier general in 1865 for meritorious service during the war; he was town supervisor in 1878 and was elected to the state legislature in 1883 and re-elected for two years in 1884.

Samuel Sloggy, assemblyman for two sessions of the legislature, 1885-87, was the representative for that part of the Kickapoo Country which comprised the 1st assembly district of Vernon County. Ontario claims Mr. Sloggy as a citizen for the past thirty-seven years; previous to that he lived at Sparta and Madison. He was born in Lawrence County, Pennsyl-



vania, July 6, 1832, came to Wisconsin 1845, settled in Ontario, on the Kickapoo River in 1859. He was chairman of the town board for 10 years; has been clerk of the school for nearly twenty years; was postmaster under Benjamin Harrison's administration and is considered one of the substantial business men of Ontario. His first occupation was farming, but he afterwards went in the drug business and is now proprietor of a large and prosperous business.

J. O. Davidson, of Soldiers Grove, was born in Norway, February 10, 1854, and was educated in the common schools of his native country. He came to Wisconsin in 1872, residing first at Madison, later at Boscobel and since 1877 at Soldiers Grove. He has been engaged in the mercantile business for over twenty years. He was president of the village of Soldiers Grove during 1888 and 1889, treasurer in 1892 and 1893 and was elected to the assembly in 1892; re-elected in 1894 and again re-elected in 1896. He has been an active member of that body, standing for what he deemed to be the best interests of his constituents and the people of his district. He has won the esteem of all who have come in contact with him, both at home and throughout the state. He is frank, honest and honorable with his fellowmen and fills positions of trust with honor and credit.

Van S. Bennett, of Rockton, Vernon County, Wisconsin, was born in Medina, Ohio, March 15, 1836; received an academic education; removed to Wisconsin with his parents in 1846, settling in the town of Medina, Dane County; thence to Jefferson County in 1852 and to Richland County in 1855;

located at Rockton in 1866; is by occupation a merchant and farmer. He enlisted in Company I. of the 12th Wisconsin Infantry in September, 1861, in which organization he served as lieutenant and captain until 1864 when his term of service expired; was superintendent of schools in Richland County in 1866, which position he resigned for the purpose of going into active business at his present home; has served several terms on the county board of supervisors of Vernon County of which body he has been four times chairman; was member of assembly in 1869 and 1870, and state senator in 1882 and 1883. At the present time Mr. Bennett has a store, flouring mill and several good farms.

George H. Tate was born April 30, 1824, at Attleboro, Massachusetts; spent his boyhood days in Vermont; moved to Boston in 1845 where he resided for twenty years; came to Wisconsin in 1865 and settled at Viola, engaging immediately in the mercantile business which he continued until 1885. He was postmaster in Viola from 1865 to 1875 and was elected member of assembly in 1882, serving one term. He owns one of the best business squares in the town upon which he has store buildings erected which he leases. He is well situated and has his money mostly invested in railroad stocks and real estate mortgages. Mr. Tate has been a good financier during his business career and labored hard to lay up something for the maintenance of himself and wife in their declining years.

George E. Tate, son of George H. Tate, was born in 1848 in Boston, Massachusetts; at the age of

seventeen came with his parents to Viola, Wisconsin. He was engaged in the mercantile business with his father for many years in Viola, and for five years in Readstown. In 1882 he sold out his merchandise business and moved to his farm about five miles above Viola where he still resides. He represented Richland County in the assembly in 1887; is postmaster at La Farge at the present time and a stockholder in the Stark Co-Operative Company's store. He owns one of the best farms in the valley and has it well stocked. He has just erected a fine, large barn which makes everything complete and convenient.

Calvin E. Morley was born in Chautauqua County, New York, in 1843; came to Wisconsin in the winter of 1858-59; enlisted in Company C. of the 19th Wisconsin Infantry, February, 1862, and was discharged in April, 1865; came to Readstown in 1865; served as member of town board several terms; was elected county coroner, elected sheriff in same county in 1876. Mr. Morley was colonel and aid de camp of Gen. Rusk's staff while he was governor of Wisconsin and served six years in this position. He is at present superintendent of public property at the capital in Madison, which position he has held for the past two years. Mr. Morley owns a farm just outside the village of Readstown where he still claims a home.

## The People; Social Conditions.

The inhabitants of the Kickapoo Valley are almost wholly of American birth. Probably New York, Ohio and Indiana have contributed more of the residents than any other states. Quite a number of "Pennsylvania Dutch" have immigrated here and a few from New England. Of the foreigners, almost all are of Norwegian birth. It is well known that Norwegians make as good citizens as any Europeans who come to our shores. They are thrifty, honest, patriotic, yielding cheerful obedience to our laws and not seeking to perpetuate their own language and customs in parochial schools.

The Kickapoogians as a whole are not a moneyed class, but they believe with the apostle that "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." There are many individuals among their number who are possessed of much houses and lands and flocks and herds and bank stock, but the vast majority are in moderate circumstances only. Nineteen-twentieths of the farmers own the land they till. Very nearly as large a proportion of the villagers own the house and lot on which they live.

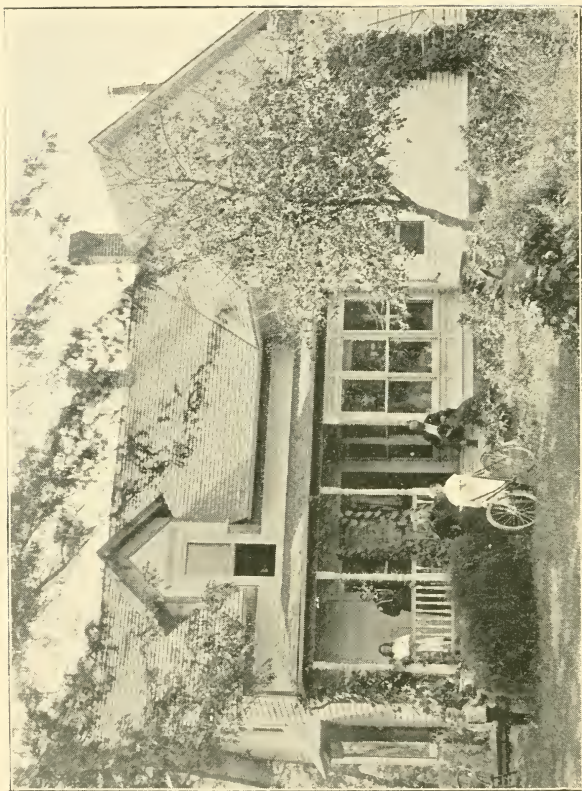
There is practically no pauper class here. Out of a population of 14,779, throughout the eighty miles

of the Kickapoo Valley there were about one hundred and fifty persons who received some aid from the public treasury last year. The amount paid was \$679.55, an average of about \$4.50 to each. One township, that of Forest in which Viola is situated, received none.

The homes on the Kickapoo are characterized by comfort rather than by display. While many of them are elegant in their appointments, a few are of a primitive style. But to the rich and to the poor alike, the stately bluffs add dignity, and the smiling valleys, murmuring streams and diversified woodlands give beauty.

Just here let it be noted that no more charming spots for camping in tents or in cottages can be found in Wisconsin than are *hundreds* of locations on the Kickapoo River and its tributaries. The cost of living is not great, and with the hunting, fishing, boating and delightful excursions by team or bicycle a most enjoyable season may be passed.

Among a people so nearly on a par with each other financially, and each one a free American citizen residing in his own house and tilling his own land, one does not expect to find marked class distinctions. Social divisions are made in accordance with a high, if sometimes narrow standard of moral living. Mutual tastes and ambitions, intellectual power and environment produce "sets" in society just as it universally does. No one is ashamed to work. Some may be too lazy to do so but such are few. The children of both the well-to-do and of the poorer



Residence of N. D. Ward.  
(From a Photograph by E. O. Sloulin.)

parents are taught that it is no disgrace to be a worker, but that the shirker is to be despised.

Like true Americans every where, the people residing in this Valley take an active interest in both national and international affairs. The great dailies of Chicago and Milwaukee, usually the former, have hundreds of subscribers in this region, and their readers are well qualified to argue each his own political creed, or to discuss matters of general interest. Poor indeed is the home in the Kickapoo Valley into which some one of the local weekly papers do not go. Magazines and religious papers are found on every hand, and scarcely a family but has at least a few books.

The religious belief of the professed followers of Christ is not of that superstitious variety that "troubles one like a gadfly" as Mrs. Humphrey Ward says, but has a healthful tone manifesting itself in upright living and a firm belief in the ultimate triumph of right. As a whole the people may be classed as conservative but not stubbornly so. They are open to conviction. Many aggressive workers against sin and unrighteousness are to be found in every community. They receive the cordial support of the general public. The temperance cause has always had a large following and warm advocates. The villages of Star, La Farge, Readstown and Barnum are habitually no-license towns. Viola for twenty years or more was free from the saloon curse; but three years ago license carried in the town of Liberty, Vernon County, in which a portion of the village is located. In the town of Forest there is yet an overwhelming majority for no license.



Churches and schools and all public institutions are well supported. Not every one takes advantage of the opportunities open to him. But many persons who are far from being scholarly, like Whittier's "Barefoot Boy" are rich in "knowledge never learned of schools," and possessed of a refinement which springs from an inborn sense of justice and a love for truth and for humanity.

Hospitality is considered one of the prime virtues. It is bestowed with a disinterestedness and homely charm that warms the heart of any but the most cynical.

A letter from Rev. William Haughton, pastor of Congregational Church at Retreat, Wisconsin, in answer to a request for the poem which he so kindly contributed and which appears on the cover of this book, expresses so well some facts concerning the Kickapoo Valley and its inhabitants, that with his permission extracts are here made from it:— "I am glad you contemplate the issue of such a pamphlet. I always admired the Kickapoo. Many pleasant days have I journeyed by its waters, and sitting on its bank under the trees one day to rest, I composed that poem "The Kickapoo" a copy of which I enclose you.

I am surprised that any should advertise the Kickapoo Valley in adverse terms. I traveled up and down that Valley twice a year for five years or more, and never have I met more generous or hospitable people. I have preached frequently in Readstown, Bloomingdale, Rockton, Seeleyburg, Gays Mills, Ontario and on up the Kickapoo and always found a

quiet, orderly and appreciative audience. And some of the kindest and most Christian homes I have ever lodged in were on the Kickapoo and the plains about it. I am surprised that any one should defame the dear old Kickapoo. To be sure there were some "roughs" there as there are in all other places, but this is the exception not the rule.—Well I always love to look upon the bright side of everything and every place, and indeed the Kickapoo has many bright spots for me and lingers very tenderly in my recollection. Good Christian men and women there, able men and women intellectually, and many generous hearts. Some of our best Vernon County teachers came from the Kickapoo. I remember them well. It is unfair and unkind to speak evil of the Kickapoo.—I am glad to be able to give my honest testimony as regards the good people of that part of Vernon County watered by the dear old Kickapoo."





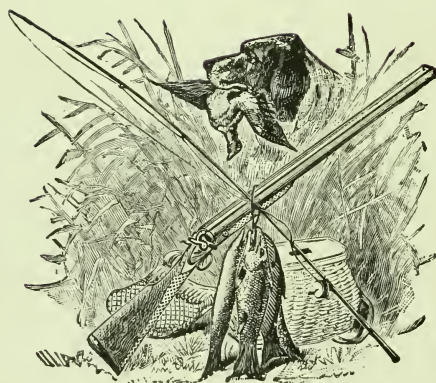


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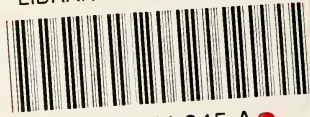








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